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CHRIST'S AGONY.

And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

Luke XXII. Chap. 43 V.

THE LIFE

OF

OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR

JESUS CHRIST;

CONTAINING A FULL AND ACCURATE HISTORY, FROM HIS TAKING UPON HIMSELF OUR NATURE, TO HIS CRUCIFIXION, RESURRECTION, AND ASCENSION: TOGETHER WITH THE

LIVES, TRANSACTIONS, AND SUFFERINGS OF HIS HOLY EVANGELISTS, APOSTLES, AND OTHER PRIMITIVE MARTYRS:

TO WHICH IS ADDED

THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS.

COMPILED AND PREPARED FROM THE WORKS OF

REV. JOHN FLEETWOOD, D. D.

"But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."—John xx. 31.

NEW-HAVEN:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY NATHAN WHITING.

1833.

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PREFACE.

THE first and greatest object that should most materially engage the attention of mankind is, the pursuit of that knowledge which tends to promote their welfare while on this transitory stage of life, and their eternal happiness in that which is to come. No measures whatever can be taken to effect this, but the most earnest endeavors to make themselves perfectly acquainted with, and strictly to follow the example of our blessed Redeemer, the great Captain of our sufferings—the preserver of our souls from death to life everlasting—the grand pattern of sanctity, humility, meekness, and charity—the King of glory—the guiding star to righteousness—and who, as himself expresses it, is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

As, therefore, in our blessed Redeemer only, rests the whole of our eternal salvation, let Him only engross our most serious attention: and let the examples of his holy Apostles, who have sealed their faith with their blood, inspire us with resolution to make us emulous to be accounted voluntary servants of Christ, who condescended to suffer an ignominious and painful death, to clear us from our sins, and the punishment due to our manifold offences.

In seriously perusing the life and transactions of the great Redeemer of mankind, we shall there find those balmy sweets, those solid comforts, which, if properly attended to, will promote our felicity here, and secure to us eternal happiness hereafter. If we endeavor to pursue the divine system laid down by our blessed Saviour, there is no reason to doubt but our obedience will be crowned with that reward which he had been pleased to promise to all those who imitate his glorious example. Our blessed Lord himself tells us, that if we are poor in spirit, we shall gain the kingdom of heaven; if we mourn here, we shall be comforted; if we hunger and thirst after righteousness, we shall be filled. It is from

these assurances that St. Augustine says, " the happiness of this life consists in the Holy Ghost, without which we cannot come to the knowledge of God." All true knowledge, virtue and perfection, that a Christian can desire or attain to, are contained in the doctrines and transactions of our glorious Redeemer; who teaches us that righteousness and holiness consist in the inward purity and integrity of the mind, and not in the outward show of works; in a conscience void of offence, not in the pompous applause of men; in humility, not in ostentation; in contempt, not in pursuit of worldly honors; and he farther teaches us to love our enemies as well as our friends. Have we read of the nature of true faith; of trusting in Christ alone; and how we ought not to glory but in him. Here we read also of the certainty of salvation, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and of life eternal.

We most sincerely hope that the perusal of this work will produce that effect for which it is so happily adapted, namely, the promotion of the cause of Christianity, and making mankind wise unto salvation. A serious attention to the divine transactions contained in this history, will fill the mind with awful, though pleasing ideas; banish every doubt; confirm the reader in the most sublime truths, and fill his soul with divine ecstacies.

We shall only further observe, that in the execution of this pious work, we have endeavored to improve the understanding and warm the heart, to inspire the mind with gratitude for the astonishing love of a dying Saviour, and to excite the soul to embrace his kind invitations of forgiveness, of happiness, and peace.

AN

INTRODUCTORY

DISSERTATION,

IN WHICH

THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY ARE FAIRLY STATED, THE NEW TESTAMENT PROVED TO BE GENUINE, AND THE RELIGION OF JESUS TRULY DIVINE.

It is a well attested truth, that immorality ever grows with infidelity, and to the prevalence of vice must certainly be imputed that scorn and derision in which too many in the present day hold the sacred oracles of God, the revealed will of the Great Creator of Heaven and Earth.

From hence, therefore, it is reasonable to ask, what cause can produce so strange a deviation from the ways of God? Doubtless from that unhappy disregard, either to the Gospel in general, or to his peculiar and essential truths so visible in the world, and which appear to be continually increasing. It is too evident, that multitudes among us, like those of old, who thought and professed themselves the wisest of mankind, or, in other words, the *free-thinkers* of the age, have been desirous of banishing God and his truths from their knowledge; and it is therefore the less to be wondered at, if "God has given them up to a reprobate mind;" to the most infamous lusts and enormities; and to a depth of degeneracy, which, while it is in part the natural consequence, it is in part also the just, but dreadful punishment of their apostacy from the faith. And we are persuaded that those who wish well to the cause of Christ, as every true Christian most certainly does, cannot serve it more effectually, than by endeavouring to establish men in their belief of the Gospel in general, and to build them up in the most holy faith. The latter, we flatter ourselves, we have sufficiently done in the following lives of the blessed Jesus, and his Apostles and followers; and propose in this Dissertation, to prove that the Christian Religion is true, and owes its origin to God himself.

It will be needless to observe, that this is a matter of the highest importance, as every one will apprehend that this is the foundation of all our hopes. It is absolutely necessary in this age of libertinism, that every Christian should be able "to give a reason for the hope that is in him," and to put to silence the tongues of those men that have "evil will at Zion." And may the Almighty enable us to plead his cause with success! May the divine Spirit accompany these arguments, that the faith of our readers being more and more established, it may appear that the tree is watered at the roots, by all the other graces growing and flourishing in an equal proportion!

God has made ample provision for the honour and support of his Gospel, by furnishing it with a variety of proofs, which may, with undiminished, and indeed, with growing conviction, be displayed in the eyes of the whole world: and we should be greatly wanting in gratitude to him, in zeal for a Redeemer's kingdom, and in charitable concern for the conversion of those who reject the Gospel, as well as for the edification of those who embrace it, should we wholly overlook those arguments, or neglect to acquaint ourselves with them. This is the evidence we propose, and beg our readers would peruse it with becoming attention.

In prosecution of this great design, we shall endeavour more particularly to show, that if we take the matter on a general survey, it will appear highly probable, that such a system of doctrines and precepts, as we find Christianity to be, should indeed have been a "divine Revelation;" and then, that if we examine into the external evidence of it, we shall find it *certain in fact* that it was so, and that it had its origin from on high.

First then, we are to show, that taking the matter merely in theory, it will appear highly probable, that such a system as the Gospel, should be indeed, a divine revelation.

To prove this, we shall endeavour to show, That the state of mankind was such as greatly to need a revelation; That there seems, from the light of nature, encouragement to hope that God would grant one; That it is reasonable to believe, that if any were made, it should be introduced and transmitted as Christianity was; and, That its general nature and substance should be such as we find that of the Gospel is. If we satisfactorily prove these particulars, there will be a strong *presumptive evidence* that the "Gospel is from God," and a fair way will be opened for that more *divine proof* which is principally intended.

1. The case of mankind is naturally such as to need a divine revelation.

We would not be understood to speak here of a man in his original state, though even then, some instruction from above seemed necessary to inform him of many particulars, which it was highly proper for him then to know; but we speak of him in the degenerate condition in which he now so evidently lies, by whatever means he fell into it. It is very easy to make florid encomiums on the perfection of natural light, and to deceive unwary readers by an ambiguous term, as a late author has done in his deistical writings; a fallacy beneath an ingenuous reasoner, and which alone ought to have exposed his book to the contempt of every serious reader. Truth needs no disguise; a candid advocate scorns such subterfuges; let facts speak for themselves, and controversy will soon be decided. We appeal to every intelligent reader, who is acquainted with the records of antiquity, or that has any knowledge of the present state of those countries where Christianity is unknown, whether it is not too obvious a truth, that the whole heathen world has lain, and still lies, in a state of wickedness. Have not the greater part of them been perpetually bewildered in their religious notions and practices, very different from each other, and almost equally differing on all sides from the appearances of truth and reason? Is any thing so wild as not to have been believed; any thing so infamous as not to have been practised by them, while they not only pretended to justify it by reason, but to have consecrated it as a part of their religion? To this very day, what are the discoveries of new nations in the American or African world; but, generally speaking, the opening of new scenes of enormity? Rapine, lust, cruelty, human sacrifices, and the most stupid idolatries, are, and always have been, the morality and religion of almost all the Pagan nations under heaven; and if they have discovered a dawn of reason, it has only sufficed to convince them of the want of an abler guide, to direct them in pursuit of real happiness.

But perhaps some of our readers have only heard these things by uncertain reports. If this be the case, look around you within the sphere of your own observation, and remark the temper and character of the generality of those who have been educated in a Christian, and even in a Protestant country. Observe their ignorance and forgetfulness of the Divine Being, their impieties, their debaucheries, their fraud, their oppression, their pride, their avarice, their ambition, their unnatural insensibility of the wants, sorrows, and interests of each other; and when you see how bad they generally are in the midst of so many advantages, judge by that of the probable state of those that want them. When the candid reader has well weighed these particulars, let him judge whether a *revelation* be an *unnecessary thing*.

2. There is, from the light of nature, considerable encouragement to hope, that God would favour his creatures with so desirable a thing as a revelation appears to be.

That a revelation is in itself a possible thing is evident beyond all shadow of doubt. Shall not He that "made man's mouth," who has given us this wonderful faculty of discovering our sentiments, and communicating our ideas to each other: shall not He be able to converse with his rational creatures, and, by sensible manifestations, or inward impressions, to convey the knowledge of things which lie beyond the discernment of their natural faculties, and yet may be highly conducive to their advantage? To own a God, and to deny him such a power would be a notorious contradiction. But it may appear much more dubious, whether he will please to confer such a favour on sinful creatures.

Now it must be acknowledged, that he would not certainly conclude he would never do it; considering, on the one hand, how justly they stood exposed to his final displeasure: and, on the other, what provision he had made by the frame of the human mind, and of nature around us, for giving us such notices of himself, as would leave us inexcusable, if we either failed to know him, or to glorify him as God, as the apostle argues at large. (Rom. i. 20, &c.) Nevertheless, we should have something of this kind to hope from considering God as the indulgent father of his creatures; from observing the tender care he takes of us, and the liberal supply which he grants for the support of the animal life; especially from the provision he has made for man, consdered as a guilty and calamitous creature, by the medicinal and healing virtues he has given to the productions of nature, which man in a perfect state of rectitude and happiness, never would have needed.

This is a circumstance which seems strongly to intimate, that he would some time or other, graciously provide an adequate remedy to heal the minds of the children of men; and that he would interpose to instruct them in his own nature, in the manner in which he is to be served, and in the final treatment which they may expect from him. And certainly such an apprehension seems very congruous to the sentiments of the generality of mankind, a sufficient proof that men naturally expect some such kind of interposition of the Almighty.

3. It is natural to conclude, that if a revelation were given, it would be introduced, and transmitted in such a manner as the Evangelists show us Christianity was.

It is, for instance, highly probable that it should be taught either by some illustrious person, sent down from a superior world, or at least by a man of eminent wisdom and piety, who should himself have been not only a teacher, but an example

of righteousness. In order to this, it seems probable, that he should be led through a series of calamities and distress; since, otherwise he could not have been a pattern of that resignation, which adorns adversity, and is peculiar to it. And it might also have been expected that, in the extremity of his distress, the Almighty, whose messenger he was, should, in some extraordinary manner, have interposed either to preserve or to recover him from death.

It is, moreover, exceedingly probable, that such a person, and perhaps also those who were at first employed as his messengers to the world, should be endowed with a power of working miracles, both to awaken men's attention, and to prove his divine mission, and the consequent truth of his doctrines, some of which might perhaps be capable of no other proof; or if they were, it is certain that no method of arguing is so short, so plain, and so forcible, and on the whole so well suited to conviction, and probably, to the reformation of mankind, as a course of evident, repeated, and uncontrolled miracles. And such a method of proof is especially adapted to the populace, who are incomparably the greater part of mankind, and for whose benefit we may assure ourselves a revelation would be chiefly designed. It might be added, that it was no way improbable, though not in itself certain, that a dispensation should open gradually to the world; and that the most illustrious messenger of God to men should be ushered in by some predictions which should raise a great expectation of his appearance, and have an evident accomplishment in him.

As to the propagation of a religion so introduced, it seems no way improbable, that having been thus established in its first age, it should be transmitted to future generations by credible testimony, as other important facts are. It is certain, that affairs of the utmost moment, transacted among men, depend on testimony; on this, voyages are undertaken, settlements made, and controversies decided; controversies on which not only the estates but the lives of men depend. Though it must be owned, that such an historical evidence is not equally convincing with miracles which are wrought before our own eyes; yet it is certain it may rise to such a degree as to exclude all reasonable doubt. We know not why we should expect, that the evidence of a revelation should be such as universally to compel the immediate acquiescence of all to whom it is offered. It appears much more probable, that it should be so adjusted as to be a kind of touchstone to the tempers and characters of men, capable, indeed, of giving ample satisfaction to the diligent and candid inquirer, yet attended with some circumstances, from whence the captious and perverse might take occasion to cavil and object. Such we might reasonably suppose a revelation would

be, and such we maintain Christianity is. The teachers of it undertake to prove that it was thus introduced, thus established, and thus transmitted; and we trust that this is a strong presumption in its favour, especially as we can add,

4. That the principal doctrines contained in the Gospel are of such a nature, that we might in general suppose a divine revelation would be—rational, practical, and sublime.

It is natural to imagine, that in a revelation of a religion from God, the great principles of natural religion should be clearly asserted, and strongly maintained: such as the existence the unity, the perfection, and the providence of God; the essential and immutable difference between moral good and evil; the obligations we are under to the various branches of virtue, whether human, social, or divine; the value and immortality of the soul; and the rewards and punishments of a future state. All these particulars every rational person would conclude were contained in it; and that upon the whole it should appear calculated to form men's minds to a proper temper, rather than to amuse them with curious speculations.

It might, indeed, be farther supposed, that such a revelation would contain some things which could not have been learned from the highest improvements of natural light: such as, that God would pardon the sins of the most flagrant offender, on account of the satisfaction made by his dear Son, the Redeemer of the world; that he would work holy desires in the hearts of his people, by the power of his divine grace, and form them for happiness hereafter by implanting in them a principle of holiness.

In short, the Christian system is undoubtedly worthy of God, nor is it possible to imagine from whom else it could have proceeded.*

Thus have we considered the first branch of the argument, and shown, we hope satisfactorily, that, taking the Christian system only in theory, it appears highly probable. The truth is, that to embrace the Gospel is so safe, and upon the whole so comfortable a thing, that a wise man would deliberately venture his all upon it, though nothing more could be offered for its confirmation. But, blessed be God, we have a great deal more to offer in this important cause; and can add, with still greater confidence, that it is not only probable in theory, but,

Secondly, That it is in fact certain, that Christianity is, indeed, a divine revelation.

* From what has been said, it sufficiently appears, that a revelation was absolutely necessary to instruct mankind in the most important principles of religion; and consequently all the fallacious arguments of deistical writers, against the necessity of an extraordinary revelation, fall to the ground like a mighty structure when the foundation is destroyed.

On this it must be confessed the chief stress is to be laid; and therefore we shall insist more largely on this branch of the argument, and endeavour, by the divine assistance, to prove the certainty of this great, this important fact. And in order to this, it will be necessary to show,

I. That the books in the New Testament, now extant, may be depended upon as written by the first preachers and publishers of Christianity. And,

II. That from hence it will certainly follow, that what they assert is true, and that the religion they teach brings with it such evidences of a divine authority, as may justly recommend it to our acceptance.

Each of these heads would furnish matter for several volumes; but as we are writing only a Dissertation, it is our business to strike at the most obvious and important particulars, by which they may be briefly illustrated and confirmed.

We are to prove, that the books of the New Testament, now extant, were written by the first preachers and publishers of Christianity.

We shall now confine ourselves to the books of the New Testament, as that particular part of the sacred oracles has engrossed our present attention, though we propose, in another place, to lay down some solid arguments in defence of the authenticity of the Old, which is an invaluable treasure, being the very foundation of the New, and demands our daily pleasing and grateful perusal, and is capable of being defended in a manner we are persuaded its most subtle enemies will never be able to answer.

After premising these particulars, we shall go on to the argument, and advance it by the following degrees: We shall prove that Christianity is an ancient religion;—That there was such a person as Jesus of Nazareth crucified above seventeen hundred years ago, at Jerusalem;—That the first preachers of his religion wrote books, which went by the name of those that now make up the volume of the New Testament;—And that the English translation of them, now publicly used, is in the main faithful, and may be depended upon.

1. It is certain, that Christianity is not a new religion, but one that was maintained by great multitudes soon after the time in which the Gospels tell us Jesus appeared.

That there was, considerably more than seventeen hundred years ago, a body of men that went by the name of Christians, is full as evident as that a race of men was then subsisting in the world; nor do we know that any enemy to the religion of Jesus has ever been vile and confident enough to dispute it. Indeed, there are such numbers, both of Christian and Heathen writers, who attest this fact, that it would be madness to deny

it, and therefore superfluous for us to prove it. But we cannot help observing, that Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny, Marcus Antoninus, and others, not only attest the existence of such a body of men, but also inform us of the extreme persecutions they underwent in the very infancy of their religion; a strong evidence that they were firmly persuaded that their religion was from on high.

2. That there was such a person as Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified at Jerusalem, when Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor there.

It can never be imagined, that multitudes of people should take their names from Christ, and sacrifice their lives for their adherence to him, even in the same age in which he lived, if they had not been well assured that there was such a person. Nay, Tacitus himself tells us, that he was put to death under Pontius Pilate, who was procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius. And it is well known that the primitive Christian apologists often appeal to the acts of Pilate, or the memoirs of his government, which he, according to the customs of all other procurators, transmitted to Rome, as containing an account of these transactions; and as the appeal was made to those who had the command of the public records, we may assure ourselves such testimonies were then extant. But it is a fact which our enemies never denied. They owned it; they even gloried in it, and upbraided the Christians with the infamous death of him whom they called their Saviour. Thus it sufficiently appears, that there was at the time, commonly supposed, such a person as our blessed Saviour Christ, who was a divine teacher, and who gathered many disciples, by whom his religion was afterwards published in the world.

3. It is also certain, that the first publishers of this religion wrote books, which contained an account of the life and doctrines of Jesus their Master, and which went by the names of those that now make up our New Testament.

It was in the nature of things highly probable, that they would declare and publish to the world, in writing, the things they had seen and heard, considering how common books were in the age and countries in which they taught; and of how great importance an acquaintance with the history and doctrine of Christ was to the purposes which they so strenuously pursued: but we have much more than such a presumptive evidence.

The most inveterate adversaries to Christianity must grant that we have books of great antiquity, written some fourteen, some fifteen, and some more than sixteen hundred years ago; in which mention is made of the life of Christ, as written by many, and especially by four of his disciples, who, by way

of eminence, are styled Evangelists. Great pains have indeed been taken to endeavour to prove that some spurious pieces were published under the names of the apostles, containing the history of these things. But all these have been confuted, and the vile assertors stigmatized with that contempt their false asseverations justly deserved. And we are sure he must be very little acquainted with the ancient ecclesiastical writers who does not know that the primitive Christians made a great difference between those writings, which we call the canonical books of the New Testament, and others; which plainly shows that they did not judge of writings merely by the names of their pretended authors, but inquired with an accuracy becoming the importance of these pretences. The result of this inquiry was, that the four Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles of St. Paul, one of St. Peter, and one of St. John, were received upon such evidence, that Eusebius, a most accurate and early critic in these things, could not learn that they had ever been disputed. And afterwards the remaining books of the New Testament, namely, Hebrews,—James,—the second of Peter,—the second and third of John,—Jude,—and the Revelations, were admitted as genuine, and added to the rest. On the whole it is sufficiently plain, that the primitive Christians were so thoroughly satisfied of the authority of the sacred books, that they speak of them, not only as credible and authentic, but as equal to the oracles of the Old Testament, as divinely inspired, as the word of the Spirit, as the law and organ of God, and as the rule of faith, which cannot be contradicted without the greatest guilt; with many other expressions of the same kind, which often occur in their discourses. To which we may add, that in some of their councils the New Testament was placed on a throne, to signify their desire that all their controversies might be determined, and their actions regulated by it.

From the whole, therefore it is plain, that the primitive church did receive certain pieces which bore the same titles with the books of our New Testament. Now we think it is evident, that they were as capable of judging whether a book was written by Matthew, John, or Paul, as the ancient Romans could be of determining whether Horace, Tully, or Livy, wrote those which go under their names. And certainly the interest of the former was much more concerned in the writings of the apostles, than that of the latter in the compositions of their poets, orators, or even their historians; and there is reason to believe they would take much greater care to inform themselves fully in the merits of the cause, and to avoid being imposed upon by artifice and fiction. Let us now proceed to show,

4. That the books of the New Testament have been preserved

in the main uncorrupted to the present time, in the original language in which they were written.

This is a matter of the last importance; and, blessed be God, we have a proportional evidence: an evidence in which the hand of Providence has indeed been remarkably seen; for it is certain there is no other ancient book in the world, which may so certainly and so easily be proved to be authentic.

And here we will not argue merely from the piety of the primitive Christians, and the heroic actions and resolutions with which they chose to endure the greatest extremities, rather than deliver up their Bibles, though that consideration is evidently of the greatest weight; but shall entreat our readers to consider the utter improbability of altering them. From the first ages they were received and read in churches, as a part of their public worship, just as Moses and the prophets were in the Jewish synagogues; they were presently spread far and near, as the boundaries of the church were increased; they were early translated into other languages, of which translations some remain to this very day. Now, when this was the case, how could they be adulterated? Is it a thing to be supposed and imagined, that thousands and millions of people should have come together from distant countries; and that with all the diversities of language and customs, and, it may be added, of sentiments, too, they should have agreed on corrupting a book, which they all acknowledged to be the rule of their faith and their manners, and the great charter by which they held their eternal hopes? It would be madness to believe it, especially when we consider what numbers of heretics appeared in the very infancy of the church, who all pretended to build their notions on Scripture, and most of them appealed to it as the final judge of controversies. Now it is certain, that these different sects of Christians were a perpetual guard upon each other, and rendered it impossible for one party to practise thus grossly on the sacred books, without the discovery and clamour of the rest.

Nor must we omit to observe, that in every age, from the apostles' time to our own, there have been numberless quotations made from the books of the New Testament; and a multitude of commentaries in various languages, and some of very ancient date, have been written upon them; so that if the books themselves were lost, they might, in a great measure, if not entirely, be recovered from the writings of others. And we may venture to say, that if all the quotations ever made from all the ancient writings now in Europe were gathered together, the bulk of them would by no means be comparable to that of the quotations taken from the New Testament alone. So that any

man might with much better reason dispute whether the writings ascribed to Homer, Demosthenes, Virgil, or Cæsar, be in the main such as they left them, than he could question it concerning those of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, James, and Paul.

It may be said in the main, because we readily allow, that the hand of a printer, or of a transcriber, might chance, in some places, to insert one letter or word for another; and the various readings of this, as well as all other ancient books, prove that this has sometimes been the case. But those various readings are generally of such little importance, that he who can urge them as an objection against the assertion we are now maintaining, must have little judgment, or little integrity; and, indeed, after those excellent things which have been said on the subject by many defenders of Christianity, he must, if he has read their writings, have little modesty too.

Since then it appears that the books in the New Testament, as they now stand in the original, are, without any material alteration, such as they were when they came from the hands of the sacred authors, nothing remains to complete this part of the argument, but to show,

5. That the translation of them now in common use may be depended upon, as, in all particulars, agreeable to the original.

This is a fact of which the generality of readers are not able to judge immediately, though it is of the last importance; it is, therefore, with great pleasure we reflect, how ample evidence they may have another way, to make their mind easy on this head. We mean by the concurrent testimony of others, in circumstances in which it cannot be imagined they would unite to deceive them.

There are few who preach the Gospel of the Son of God, but have examined this matter with the greatest care, and are able to judge in so easy a case; and who will all unanimously declare, that the common English translation is in the main faithful and judicious. We do not, indeed, scruple, on some occasions, to animadvert upon it; but these remarks never affect the fundamentals of religion, and seldom reach any further than the beauty of a figure, or the connexion of an argument.

But the argument does not wholly rest on the unanimous suffrages of the teachers of the Gospel. The different sects of protestants in this kingdom bear witness to this truth. For it is certain, that where a body of men dissent from the public establishment, and yet agree with the church from which they dissent, in using the same translation, though they are capable of examining and judging of it, it is as great evidence as can be desired, that such a translation is right in the main. But the dissenters unanimously unite with us in bearing testimony to

the oracle of God, as delivered in our own language: and consequently our translation may be depended upon.

Thus have I finished the part of my argument, and shown that the Christian religion is certainly true, and that the New Testament is genuine. I shall next proceed to show,

II. That from allowing the New Testament to be genuine, it will undeniably follow, that Christianity is a divine revelation.

And here a person is at first ready to be lost in the multiplicity of arguments which surround him. It is very easy to find proofs, but difficult to range and dispose them in such an order as best to illustrate and confirm each other. We shall therefore offer them in the following natural series.

The authors of the books contained in the New Testament were certainly capable of judging concerning the truth of the facts they asserted: their characters, so far as we can judge of them by their writings, render them worthy of regard; and they were under no temptation to attempt imposing on the world by such relations as they have given us, if they had been false. Nevertheless, it is certain in fact, they did gain credit, and succeeded in a most amazing manner, against all opposition. It is therefore certain, that the facts which they asserted were true; and if they were true, then it was reasonable for their contemporaries, and it is reasonable for us, to receive the Gospel as a divine revelation; especially if we consider what has happened to the world for the confirmation of it, since first propagated by them. This is the conclusion to which we must attend; and therefore let us seriously consider each of the steps by which we arrive at it.

It is exceedingly evident, that the writers of the New Testament certainly knew the facts they asserted were true.

And this they must have known, for this plain reason: because they inform us, they did not trust merely to the report even of persons whom they thought most credible, but were present themselves when several of the most important facts happened; and so received them on the testimony of their own senses. On this St. John, in his first epistle, ch. i. ver. 1—3, lays a very great and reasonable stress: "That which we have seen with our eyes;" and that not only by a sudden glance, but "which we have *attentively* looked upon, and *which even* our hands have handled, of the word of life:" i. e. of Christ and his Gospel, declare we unto you.

Let the common sense of mankind judge here. Did not Matthew and John certainly know whether they had personally, and familiarly, conversed with Jesus of Nazareth or not? Whether he had chosen them for his constant attendants and apostles? Whether they had seen him heal the sick, dispossess

devils, and raise the dead? And whether they themselves had received from him such miraculous endowments as they declare he bestowed upon them? Did they not know whether he fell into the hands of his enemies, and was publicly put to death or not? Did not John know whether he saw him expiring on the cross or not? and whether he received from him a dying charge, which he records, ch. xix. ver. 27? Did he not know whether he saw him wounded in the side with a spear or not? and whether he did, or did not see the effusion of blood and water, which was an infallible argument of his being really dead? Concerning which, it being so material a circumstance, he adds, "He that saw it bare record; and he knoweth that he saith true;" i. e. that it was a case in which he could not possibly be deceived. And with regard to Christ's resurrection, did he not certainly know whether he saw our Lord again and again; and whether he handled his body, that he might be sure it was not a mere phantom? What one circumstance of his life could he certainly know if he were mistaken in this?

Did not Luke know whether he was in the ship with Paul when that extraordinary wreck happened, by which they were thrown ashore on the island of Malta? Did he not know whether, while they were lodged together in the governor's house, Paul miraculously healed one of the family, and many other diseased persons in the island, as he positively asserts that he did in *Acts* xxviii.?

Did not Paul certainly know whether Christ appeared to him on the way to Damascus or not? whether he was blind; and afterwards, on the prayer of a fellow disciple, received his sight? or was that a circumstance in which there could be room for mistake? Did he not know whether he received such extraordinary revelations and extraordinary powers, as to be able, by the laying on of his hands, or by the words of his mouth, to work miracles?

To add no more: Did not Peter know whether he saw the glory of Christ's transfiguration, and heard that voice to which he so expressly refers, when he says, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty, when there came such a voice to him; and this voice we heard?" 2 *Peter*, i. 16—18.

Now Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, and Peter, are by far the most considerable writers of the New Testament; and surely when we reflect on these particulars, we must own that there are few historians, ancient or modern, that could so certainly judge of the truth of the facts which they have related. The reason why we have enlarged in stating so clear a case is, that it is the foundation of the whole argument; and that this branch of it alone, cuts off infidels from that refuge which they would

generally choose, that of pleading the apostles were enthusiasts; and leaves them silent, unless they will say that they were impostors. For you evidently see, that could we suppose these facts to be false, they could by no means pretend an involuntary mistake; but must, in the most criminal and aggravated sense, as St. Paul himself expresses it, 1 *Cor.* xv. 15. "Be found false witnesses of God." But how unreasonable it would be to charge them with so notorious a crime will in part appear if we consider,

That the character of these writers, so far as we can judge by their works, seems to render them worthy of regard; and leaves no room to imagine that they intended to deceive us.

It would be unnecessary to show at large, that they appear to have been persons of natural sense, and at the time of their writing, of a composed mind; for certainly, no man that ever read the New Testament with attention, could imagine they were idiots or madmen. Let the discourses of Christ in the Evangelists, of Peter and Paul in the Acts, as well as many passages in the Epistles, be perused, and we will venture to say, that he who is not even charmed with them, must be a stranger to all the justest rules of polite criticism. But he who suspects that the writers wanted common sense, must himself be most evidently destitute of it; and he who can suspect they might possibly be distracted, must himself, in this instance at least, be just as mad as he imagines them to have been. It was necessary, however, just to touch upon this; because unless we are satisfied that a person be himself in what he writes, we cannot pretend to determine his character from his writings.

Having premised this, let us, on perusing the New Testament, observe what evident marks it bears of simplicity and integrity, of piety and benevolence; upon which we shall find them pleading the cause of its authors, with a nervous, though gentle eloquence; and powerfully persuading the mind, that men who were capable of writing so excellently well, must evidently appear to have strictly adhered to the rectitude of truth.

The manner in which they relate this narration is most happily adapted to gain our belief. For as they tell it with a great deal of circumstance, which by no means could be prudent in legendary writers, because it leaves so much the more room for confutation; so they also do it in the most easy and natural manner. There is no air of declamation and harangue; nothing that looks like artifice and design; no apologies, no encomiums, no character, no reflections, no digressions: but the facts are recounted with great simplicity, just as they appear to have happened; and those facts are left to speak for themselves in their great author. It is plain that the rest of these writers, as well as the apostle Paul, did not affect excel-

ency of speech, or flights of eloquence, as the phrase signifies; but determined to know nothing, though amongst the most learned and polite, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. A conduct which is the more to be admired, when we consider how extraordinary a theme theirs was, and with what abundant variety of most pathetic declamation, it would easily have furnished any common writer: so that one would really wonder how they could forbear it. But they rightly judged that a vain affectation of ornament, when recording such facts of their own knowledge, might perhaps have brought their sincerity into question; and so have rendered the cross of Christ of no effect.

Their integrity likewise evidently appears in the freedom with which they mention those circumstances, which might have exposed their Master and themselves to the greatest contempt among prejudiced and inconsiderate men; such as they knew they must generally expect to meet with. As to their Master, they scruple not to own, that his country was despised, his birth and education mean, and his life indigent; that he was most disdainfully rejected by the rulers, and accused of sabbath-breaking, blasphemy, and sedition: that he was reviled by the populace as a debauchee, lunatic, and a demoniac; and at last, by the united rage of both rulers and people, was publicly executed as the vilest of malefactors, with all imaginable circumstances of ignominy, scorn, and abhorrence.

Nor do they scruple to own that terror and distress of spirit into which he was thrown by his sufferings, though this was a circumstance at which some of the heathens took the greatest offence, as utterly unworthy so excellent and divine a person. As to themselves, the apostles readily confess not only the meanness of their original employment, and the scandal of their former life, but their prejudices, their follies, and their faults, after Christ had honoured them with so holy a calling. They acknowledge their lowness of apprehension under so excellent a teacher; their unbelief, their cowardice, their ambition, their rash zeal, and their foolish contentions. So that, on the whole, they seemed every where to forget they were writing of themselves, and appear not at all solicitous about their own reputation; but only that they might represent the matter just as it was, whether they went through honour or dishonour, through evil report or good report. Nor is this all; for,

It is certain, that in their writings there are the most genuine traces, not only of a plain and honest, but of a most pious and devout, a most benevolent and generous disposition. These appear especially in the epistolary parts of the New Testament, where indeed we should most reasonably expect to find them: and of these it may be confidently affirmed, that the greater progress any one has made in love to God, in zeal for his glory, in a

compassionate and generous concern for the present and future happiness of mankind; the more humble, and candid, and temperate, and pure he is; the more ardently he loves truth, and the more steadily he is determined to suffer the greatet extremity in its defence; in a word, the more his heart is weaned from the present world, and the more it is fired with the prospect of a glorious immortality, the more pleasure he will take in reading those writings: the more will he relish the spirit which discovers itself in them, and find that as face answers to face in water, so do the traces of divine grace which appear there, answer to those which a good man feels in his own soul. Nay it may be added that the warm and genuine workings of that excellent and holy temper, which every where discovers itself in the New Testament, have for many ages been the most effectual method of animating true believers with a zeal for the honour of the Gospel, and a desire of framing their conversation as becomes the Gospel of Christ.

Where then there are such genuine marks of an excellent character, not only in their discourses, but in their epistolary writings, and those sometimes addressed to particular and intimate friends, to whom the mind naturally opens itself with the greatest freedom, surely no candid and equitable judge would lightly believe them to be all counterfeit; or would imagine, without very substantial proof, that persons who breathe such exalted sentiments of God and religion, should be guilty of any kind of wickedness; and in proportion to the degree of enormity and aggravation attending such a supposed crime, it may justly be expected that the evidence of their having really committed it should be unanswerably strong and convincing.

Now it is very certain, on the principles laid down above, that if the testimony of the apostles was false, they must have acted as detestable and villainous a part as one can easily conceive. To be found, as the apostle with his usual energy expresses it, false witnesses of God in any single instance, and solemnly declare to have done miraculously what we in our own consciences know was never done at all, would be an audacious degree of impiety, to which none but the most abandoned of mankind could arrive. Yet if the testimony of the apostles was false, as we have proved they could not be themselves mistaken in it, this must have been their case; and that not in one single instance only, but in a thousand. Their lives must, in effect, be one continued and perpetual scene of perjury; and all the most solemn actions of it (in which they were speaking to God, or speaking of him as God the Father of Christ, from whom they received their commission and powers) must be a most profane and daring insult on all the acknowledged perfections of his nature.

And the inhumanity of such a conduct would on the whole, have been equal to its impiety. For it would have been deceiving men in their most important interests, and persuading them to venture their own future happiness on the power and fidelity of one whom, on this supposition, they knew to have been an impostor, and justly to have suffered a capital punishment for his crimes. It cannot be supposed that God, who regards the interest of his children, would long suffer such an imposition to prevail, without preventing it by the interposition of his wisdom and power.

It would have been great guilt to have given the hearts and devotions of men so wrong a turn, even though they had found magistrates ready to espouse and establish, yea, and to enforce the religion they taught. But on the contrary, to labour to propagate it in the midst of the most vigorous and severe opposition from them, must equally enhance the guilt and folly of the undertaking. For by this means they would have made themselves accessary to the ruin of thousands; and all the calamities which fell on such proselytes, or even on their remotest descendants, for the sake of Christianity, would be in a great measure chargeable on these first preachers of it. The blood of honest, yea, of pious, worthy, and heroic persons, who might otherwise have been the greatest blessings to the public, would in effect, be crying for vengeance against them. And the distresses of the widows and orphans, which those martyrs might leave behind them, would join to swell the account.

So that on the whole, the guilt of those malefactors, who are from time to time the victims of public justice, even for robbery, murder, or treason, is small when compared with that which we have now been stating. And corrupt as human nature is, it appears to be utterly improbable, that twelve men should be found, we will not say in one little nation, but even on the whole face of the earth, who could be capable of entering into so black a confederacy, on any terms whatsoever.

And now, in this view of the case, let us make a serious pause, and compare it with what we have just been saying of the character of the apostles of Jesus, so far as an indifferent person could conjecture it from their writings, and then say, whether we can in our hearts believe them to have been these abandoned wretches, at once the reproach and astonishment of mankind? Would they have sealed a known falsity with their blood, or bartered their lives for the confirmation of vague notions or uncertain conjectures? We cannot surely believe such things of any, and much less of them, unless it shall appear they were in some peculiar circumstances of strong temptation; and what those circumstances could be, it is difficult even for imagination to conceive.

But history is so far from suggesting any unthought of fact, to help our imagination on this head, that it bears strongly the contrary way. I shall now proceed to show,

That they were under no temptation to forge a story of this kind, or to publish it to the world, knowing it to be false.

They could reasonably expect no gain, no reputation by it. But on the contrary, supposing it an imposture, they must, with the most ordinary share of prudence, have foreseen infamy and ruin, as the certain consequences of attempting it. For the grand foundation of their doctrines was, that Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified at Jerusalem by the Jewish rulers, was the Son of God, and the Lord of all things. We appeal to men's consciences, whether this looks at all like the contrivances of artful and designing men?

It was evidently charging upon the princes of their country, the most criminal and aggravated murder; indeed, all things considered, the most enormous act of wickedness which the sun had ever seen. They might therefore depend upon it, that these rulers would immediately employ all their art and power to confute the testimony, and to destroy their persons. Accordingly, one of them was presently stoned; another quickly beheaded; and most of the rest scattered abroad into strange cities (as we learn from the Acts of the Apostles) where they were sure to be received with great prejudices, raised against them amongst the Jews, by reports from Jerusalem, and highly strengthened by their expectation of a temporal Messiah: expectations, which, as the apostles knew by their own experience, it was exceedingly difficult to root out of men's minds: expectations which would render the doctrine of Christ crucified an insuperable stumbling-block to the Jews.

Nor could they expect a much better reception among the Gentiles, with whom their business was to persuade them to renounce the gods of their ancestors, and to depend upon a person who had died the death of a malefactor; to persuade them to forego the pompous idolatries in which they had been educated, and all the sensual indulgences with which their religion (if it may be called a religion) was attended, to worship one invisible God through one Mediator, in a most plain and simple manner; and to receive a set of precepts, most directly calculated to control and restrain not only the enormities of men's actions, but the irregularities of their hearts.

A most difficult undertaking! And to engage them to this, they had no other arguments to bring, but such as were taken from the views of an eternal state of happiness or misery, of which they asserted their crucified Jesus to be supreme disposer, who should another day dispense his blessings or his vengeance, as the Gospel had been embraced or rejected. Now, could

it be imagined, that men would easily be persuaded, merely on the credit of their affirmation, or in compliance with their importunity, to believe things which to their prejudiced minds would appear so improbable, and to submit to impositions to their corrupt inclinations so insupportable? And if they could not persuade them to it, what could the apostles then expect? What but to be insulted as fools or madmen by one sort of people; and by another to be persecuted with the most savage and outrageous cruelty, as blasphemers of their gods, as seducers of their people, and disturbers of the public peace? All which we know happened accordingly. Nay, they assure us, that their Lord had often warned them of it; and they themselves expected it; and thought it necessary to admonish their followers to expect it too. And it appears, that far from drawing back upon that account, as they would surely have done, if they had been governed by secular motives, they became so much the more zealous and arduous; and animated each other to resist, even at the price of their blood.

Now, as this is a great evidence of the integrity and piety of their characters, and thus illustrates the former head, so it serves the purpose now immediately in view, that is, it proves how improbable it is that any person of common sense should engage in an imposture, from which, as many have justly observed, they could on their own principles have nothing to expect, but ruin in this world, and damnation in the next. When we therefore consider and compare their characters and circumstances, it appears utterly improbable, on various accounts, that they would have attempted in this article to impose upon the world. But suppose that in consequence of some unaccountable, as well as some undiscoverable frenzy, they had ventured on the attempt, it is easy to show,

That, humanly speaking, they must quickly have perished in it; and their cause must have died with them, without ever gaining any credit in the world. Common sense must have suggested to them that the report of a circumstance most extraordinary in its nature, if not attested by the most convincing evidence, must have exposed their cause as base, absurd, and contemptible.

One may venture to say this in general, on the principles which we have before laid down. But it appears still more evident when we consider the nature of the fact they asserted, in conjunction with the methods they took to engage men to believe it; methods, which, had the apostles been impostors, must have had the most direct tendency to ruin both their doctrine and themselves.

Let us a little more particularly reflect on the nature of that grand fact, namely, the death, resurrection, and exaltation of

Christ; which, as already observed, was the great foundation of the Christian system, as first represented by the apostles. The resurrection of a dead man, and his ascension unto, and abode in the upper world, was so strange a thing, that a thousand objections might immediately be raised against it: and some extraordinary proofs might justly be required as a balance to them. Now the rejectors of the Gospel, it might be supposed, would set themselves to invent some hypothesis, which should have some appearance of probability, how such amazing circumstances should ever gain credit in the world, if they had not some very convincing proofs. But this, with all their endeavours, is totally impracticable; and consequently, the most convincing proof that can be given of the great truth of the whole.

When the Christian seriously considers the horrid but vain attempts these enemies to the Gospel make, to pervert that religion on which the redemption of the human race is founded, how natural is it for him to ask, Is it possible that even the most impious and obstinate atheist can read with attention, the various and astonishing circumstances that attended the divine Redeemer from his birth to his crucifixion, and yet disbelieve? Does not even the minutest circumstance and transaction fully evince the great truths of his mission? And shall the atheist continue even to doubt, merely because himself was not an eye-witness to the facts recorded by those who were?

The celebrated Dr. Watts has very justly pictured the character of the atheist in the following stanzas:

Fools in their hearts believe and say,
That all religion's vain,
There is no God that reigns on high,
Or minds the affairs of men.

From thoughts so dreadful and profane,
Corrupt discourse proceeds;
And in their impious hands are found
Abominable deeds.

Their tongues are us'd to speak deceit,
Their slanders never cease:
How swift to mischief are their feet,
Nor know the paths of peace!

Such seeds of sin (that bitter root)
In all their hearts are found;
Nor can they bear diviner fruit,
Till grace refine the ground.

But let us pursue the argument a little further, and we shall easily discover what must destroy every observation made by the Infidel, and confirm his opponent in the incontrovertible and glorious cause of the Christian religion.

The manner in which the apostles undertook to prove the truth of their testimony to these facts; and it will evidently appear, that instead of confirming their system, it must have been sufficient utterly to have overthrown it, had it been itself the most probable imposture that the wit of man could ever have contrived. It is evident that they did not merely assert that they had seen miracles wrought by this Jesus, but that he had endowed themselves with a variety of miraculous powers. And these they undertook to display, not in such idle and useless tricks as slight-of-hand might perform; but in such solid and important works as appeared worthy of a divine interposition, and entirely superior to human power: restoring sight to the blind, soundness to lepers, activity to the lame, and, in some instances, life to the dead. Nor were these things undertaken in a corner, in a circle of friends or dependants; nor were they said to have been wrought on such as might be suspected of being confederate in the fraud; but they were done often in the public streets, in the sight of enemies, on the persons of such as were utter strangers to the apostles; but sometimes well known to neighbours and spectators, as having long laboured under those calamities, which, to human skill, were utterly incurable—Would impostors have made such pretensions as these—or, if they had, must they not immediately have been exposed and ruined?

Nor is there any room at all to object, that perhaps the apostles might not undertake to do these things on the spot, but only assert that they had done them elsewhere; for even then it would have been impossible that they should have gained credit; and they would have seemed less credible, on account of such a pretence. Whatever appearance there might have been of gravity, integrity, and piety, in the conversation of Peter, for instance, very few, especially such as had known but little of him, would have taken it upon his word, that he saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead at Bethany: but fewer yet would have believed his affirmation, had it been ever so solemn, that he himself raised Dorcas at Joppa, unless he had done some extraordinary work before them, correspondent at least, if not equal to that. One may easily think of invincible objections, which otherwise might have been made; and undoubtedly the more such assertions had been multiplied, every new person, scene, and fact, had been an additional advantage given to the enemy, to have detected and confuted the whole system, which Peter and his brethren had thus endeavoured to establish.

But to come still closer to the point: If the New Testament be genuine, as we have already proved it, then it is certain that the apostles wrought miracles in the very presence of those to whom their writings were addressed; nay more, they like-

wise conferred those miraculous gifts in some considerable degree on others, even the very persons to whom they wrote; and they appeal to their consciences with regard to the truth of it. And could there possibly be room for delusion here? It is exceedingly remarkable to this purpose, that Paul makes this appeal to the Corinthians, and to the Galatians, when amongst them there were some persons disaffected to him, who were taking all opportunities to sink his character, and to destroy his influence. And could they have wished for a better opportunity than such an appeal? An appeal which, had not the fact it supposed been certain, far from recovering those that were wavering in their esteem, must have been sufficient utterly to disgust his most cordial and steady friends. The same remark may be applied to the advices and reproofs which the apostle there gives, relating to the use and abuse of their spiritual gifts; which had been notoriously absurd, and even ridiculous, had not the Christians to whom he wrote been really possessed of them. And these gifts were so plainly supernatural, that as it had been observed, if it be allowed that miracles can prove a divine revelation, and that the First Epistle to the Corinthians be genuine, (of which, by the way, there is at least as pregnant evidences as that any part of the New Testament is so,) then it follows, by a sure and easy consequence, that Christianity is true. Nevertheless, other arguments are not to be forgotten in these observations. And therefore, as we have proved, that had the testimony of the apostles been false, it is not to be imagined they could have gained credit at all; especially when they had put the proof of their cause on such a footing as we are sure they did. We shall now proceed to show,

That it is a certain fact, the apostles did gain early credit, and succeeded in a most wonderful manner; from whence it will follow, that their testimonies were true.

That the apostles did, indeed, gain credit in the world, is evident from what we before offered, in order to prove the early prevalence of Christianity in it, and this may be farther confirmed from many passages in the New Testament. And here we insist not so much on express historical testimonies, though some of them are very remarkable; especially that of the brethren at Jerusalem, who speak of vast numbers of believing Jews assembled at the feast of Pentecost, mentioned in chap. ii. of the Acts. But I argue from the Epistles written to several churches, which plainly prove, that there were congregations of Christians in Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Colosse, Thessalonica, Philippa, Laodicea, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Crete, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bythinia, and many other places; insomuch that one of the

apostles could say, "That Christ had so wrought by him to make the gentiles obedient *not only* in word *or profession, but* in deed *too;* that from Jerusalem, even round about into Illyrium, he had fully preached the Gospel of Christ;" or, as the word imports, "had accomplished" the purposes of it. And there is a great deal of reason, both from the nature of the thing, and from the testimony of ancient history, to believe that others of the apostles had considerable success elsewhere. So that St. Paul might with reason apply to them and their doctrine, what is originally spoken of the luminaries of heaven, and the instruction they communicate, "their sound has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."

So great was the number of those who were made proselytes to Christianity by the preaching of the apostles. And we have all imaginable reason to believe, that there were none of all those proselytes, but what were fully persuaded of the truth of the testimony they bore; for otherwise, no imaginable reason can be given for their entering themselves into such a profession. The apostles had no secular terror to affright their proselytes; no secular rewards to bribe them; no dazzling eloquence to enchant them; on the contrary, all these were in a powerful manner pleading against the apostles; yet their testimony was received; and their new converts were so thoroughly satisfied with the evidence they gave them of their mission, that they encountered great persecutions, and cheerfully ventured estate, liberty, and life itself, on the truth of the facts they asserted; as plainly appears from the many passages in the Epistles, which none can think the apostles would ever have written, if those first Christians had not been in a persecuted condition.

Nor will it signify any thing to object, that most of these converts were persons of a low rank and ordinary education, who therefore might be more easily imposed upon than others. For not to mention Sergius Paulus, Dionysius the Areopagite, or the domestics of Cæsar's household, (with others of superior station in life,) it is sufficient to call to mind, that the apostles did not put their cause on the issue of laboured arguments, in which the populace might quickly have been entangled and lost, but on such plain facts as they might judge of as easily and surely as any others; indeed, on what they themselves saw, and, in part too, on what they felt.

Now this might be sufficient to bring the matter to a satisfactory conclusion. It has been shown, that there is no reason to believe, that the apostles, who certainly knew the truth, would have attempted a fraud of this kind—so, if they had attempted it, they could not possibly have succeeded; nevertheless, they did succeed in a very remarkable manner. Whence it plainly follows, that what they testified was true.

Admitting the facts which they testified concerning Christ to be true, then it was reasonable for their cotemporaries, and is reasonable for us, to receive the Gospel, which they have transmitted to us as a divine revelation.

The great things they asserted were, that Jesus was the Christ; and that he was proved to be so, by prophecies accomplished in him, and by miracles wrought by him, and by others in his name. Let us attend to each of these, and we shall find them no contemptible arguments; but must be forced to acknowledge, that these premises being established, the conclusion most easily and necessarily follows. And this conclusion, "that Jesus is the Christ," taken in all its extent, is an abstract of the Gospel revelation; and therefore is sometimes put for the whole of it.

The apostles, especially when disputing with the Jews, frequently argued from the prophecies of the Old Testament, in which they say many things were expressly foretold, which were most literally and exactly fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. Now, greatly to the evidence, confirmation, and advantage of Christianity, so it is, that these prophecies are to this day extant in the original language: and this in the hands of a people most implacably averse to the Gospel. So that an attentive reader may still, in a great measure, satisfy himself as to the validity of the arguments drawn from them.

On searching these ancient and important records, we find not only in general, that it appeared the wisdom of God to raise up for his people an illustrious deliverer, who, among other glorious titles, is sometimes called the Messiah, or the Anointed One: but we are more particularly told, that this great event should happen before the government ceased in the tribe of Judah, while the second temple was standing; and a little before its destruction, about four hundred and ninety years after a command was given to rebuild Jerusalem; which was probably issued out in the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, or at least within a few years before or after it. It is predicted that he should be of the seed of Abraham, born of a virgin, of the house of David, in the town of Bethlehem; that he should be anointed with an extraordinary effusion of the Divine Spirit; in virtue of which he should not only be a perfect and illustrious example of universal holiness and goodness, but should also perform many extraordinary and beneficial miracles. Nevertheless, that for want of external pomp and splendour, he should be rejected and insulted by the Jews, and afterwards be cut off and slain by them. It is added, that he should rise from the dead before his body should be corrupted in the grave; and should be received up to heaven, and there seated at the right hand of God: from whence he should, in a won-

derful manner, pour out his spirit on his followers; in consequence of which, though the body of the Jewish people perished in their obstinate opposition to him, yet the Gentiles should be brought to the knowledge of the true God, and a kingdom established amongst them, which from small beginnings should spread itself to the end of the earth, and continue to the remotest ages.

Besides these most material circumstances, there were several others relating to him, which were either expressly foretold, or at least hinted at; all which, with those already mentioned, had so evident an accomplishment in Jesus, that we have no reason to wonder that they should receive the word with all readiness who searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so predicted there, as the apostles affirmed. For we are persuaded that no wise and religious person could imagine, that God would permit an impostor to arise, in whom so great a variety of predictions, delivered by so many different persons, and in so many distant ages, should have an exact accomplishment.

When the apostles were preaching to heathens, it is indeed true, that they might wave the argument from prophecy, because they were not capable judges of it. But when they insist on another, which might as soon captivate their belief, and as justly vindicate it; we mean, "the miracles performed by Christ, and those commissioned and influenced by him;" many of these were of such a nature as not to admit of any artifice or deceit: especially that most signal one of his resurrection from the dead, which may be called a miracle performed by, as well as upon, Christ; because he so expressly declares, that he had himself a power to resume his life at pleasure. The apostles well knew that this was a fact of such a nature that those who believed this, would never doubt of the rest. They often therefore single this out, and lay the whole stress of their cause upon it. This they proved to be true by their own testimony miraculously confirmed: and in proving this, they established Christianity on an impregnable rock. For we may safely refer it to any judge, whether it is an imaginable thing that God should raise the dead body of an impostor, especially, when he had solemnly appealed to such a resurrection, as a grand proof of his mission, and had expressly fixed the very day on which it was to happen.

From these undeniable observations it is evident, that those who, on the apostles' testimony, believed that the prophecies of the Old Testament were accomplished in Jesus, and that God bore witness to him by miracles, and raised him from the dead, had abundant reason to believe, that the doctrine which Christ taught was divine, and his Gospel a revelation from heaven.

And if they had reason to admit this conclusion, then it is plain that we, who have such satisfactory evidence, on the one hand, that the testimony of the apostles was credible, and on the other, that this was the substance of it, have reason also to admit this grand inference from it, and embrace the Gospel as a faithful saying, and well worthy of acceptation. This is the thing we have attempted to prove; and here we should finish the argument, were it not for the confirmation it may receive from some additional considerations, which could not properly be introduced under any of the preceding heads.

We therefore add, in the last place, That the truth of the Gospel has received farther and very considerable confirmation from what has happened in the world since it was first published.

And here we must desire the reader to consider, on the one hand, what has been done to establish it, and, on the other, the methods which its enemies have been taking to destroy it.

1. Consider, what God has been doing to confirm the Gospel, since its first publication. And we will venture to assert, that it will prove a farther evidence of its divine original.

We might here argue at large from its surprising propagation in the world;—from the miraculous powers with which not only the apostles, but succeeding preachers of the Gospel, and other converts, were endowed;—from the accomplishment of the prophecies recorded in the Old Testament;—and from the preservation of the Jews, as a distinct people, notwithstanding the various difficulties and persecutions through which they have passed.

It might be particularly urged, in confirmation of the truth of Christianity, the wonderful success with which it has been attended, and the surprising propagation of the Gospel in the world.

We have endeavoured, under a former head, to show, that the Gospel met with so favourable a reception in the world, as evidently proved, that its first publishers were capable of producing sufficient evidence of its truth; evidence absolutely incompatible with imposture. But we shall now carry this remark farther, and assert, that considering the circumstances of the case, it is amazing, that even truth itself, under so many disadvantages, should have so illustrious a triumph; and that its wonderful success so evidently proves such an extraordinary interposition of the Almighty in its favour, as may justly be called a miraculous attestation of it.

There was not only "one of a family, *or* two of a city, taken and brought to Zion; *but* the Lord so hastened it, in its appointed time, *that* a little one became a thousand, and a small one a strong nation." And as the apostles themselves were

honoured with very remarkable success, so this divine seed was propagated so fast in the next age, that Pliny testifies "He found the heathen temples in Achaia almost deserted:" and Tertullian afterwards boasts, "That all places, except those temples, were filled with Christians; so that were they only to withdraw, cities and provinces would be depopulated." Nor did the Gospel only triumph thus within the boundaries of the Roman empire; for long before Tertullian was born, Justin Martyr, in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew, which seems to have been written not much above an hundred years after Christ's death, declares, "That there were no nation of men, whether Greeks or Barbarians, not excepting those savages that wandered in clans from one region to another, and had no fixed habitation, who had not learned to offer prayers and thanksgivings to the Father and Maker of all, in the name of Jesus, who was crucified."

Now how is it possible to account for such circumstances as these, but by saying the hand of the Lord was with the first preachers of the Gospel, and therefore such multitudes believed, and turned to the Lord? How was it possible for so small a fountain to have swelled immediately into a mighty river, and even have so extensively spread itself on the face of the earth, if it had not sprung from the sanctuary of God, and been rendered triumphant by his Almighty arm?

Had this new religion, so directly contrary to all the prejudices of education, been formed to soothe men's vices, to countenance their errors, to defend their superstitions, or to promote their secular interests, we might easily have accounted for its prevalence in the world. Had its preachers been profound philosophers, or polite and fashionable orators, many might have been charmed, at least for a while, to follow them: or had the princes and potentates of the earth declared themselves its patrons, and armed their legions for its defence and propagation, multitudes might have been terrified into the profession, though not a soul could by such means have been rationally persuaded to the use of it. But without some such advantages as these, we can hardly conceive, how any new religion should so strangely prevail; even though it had crept into the world in its darkest ages, and the most barbarous countries; and though it had been gradually proposed in the most artful manner, with the finest veil industriously drawn over every part which might at first have given disgust to the beholder.

But every one knows that the very reverse of all this was the cause of Christianity. It is abundantly evident, from the apparent constitution of the religion of Jesus, that the lusts and errors, the superstitions and interests of carnal men, would immediately rise up against it as a most irreconcileable enemy.—

It is known that the learning and wit of the Greeks and Romans were early employed to ridicule and obstruct its progress. It is known, that as all the herd of heathen deities were to be discarded, the priests, who subsisted by the superstitious worship paid them, must in interest find themselves obliged to oppose it. It is known, that the princes of the earth drew the sword against it, and armed torments and death for the destruction of its followers. And yet it triumphed over all, though published in ages and places celebrated for learning and elegance; and proposed, not in an ornamental and artificial manner, but with the utmost plainness; the doctrines of the cross being always advanced as its grand foundation, though so notorious a stumbling-block both to the Jews and Gentiles; and the absolute necessity, not only of embracing Christianity, but also of renouncing all idol worship, being insisted on immediately and in the strongest terms, and which must have made the religion of the Gospel appear to them the most singular that had ever been taught in the world.

Had one of the wits or politicians of the present age, seen the apostles, and a few other plain men, who had been educated among the lowest of the people, as most of the first teachers of Christianity were, going out armed with nothing but faith, truth, and goodness, to encounter the power of princes, the bigotry of priests, the learning of philosophers, the rage of the populace, and the prejudices of all; how would he have derided the attempt, and said with Sanballat, "What will these feeble Jews do?" But had he seen the event, surely he must have owned with the Egyptian Magi, in a far less illustrious miracle, that it was the finger of God; and might justly have fallen on his face, even among those whom he had insulted, with an humble acknowledgement "that God was with them of a truth."

We must not forget to mention the accomplishment of several prophecies, recorded in the New Testament, as a further confirmation given by God to the Gospel.

The most eminent and signal instance under this head, is that of our Lord's prediction concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, as recorded by St. Matthew, in his twenty-fourth chapter. The tragical history of it is most circumstantially described by Josephus, the historian, who was an eye witness of it; and the description which he has given of this sad calamity so exactly corresponds with the prophecy, that one would have thought, had we not known the contrary, that it had been written by a Christian, on purpose to illustrate it. And one can never enough admire that series of amazing providences, by which the author was preserved from most imminent danger,

that he might leave us that invaluable treasure which his writings contain.

We have no need of further evidence than we find in Josephus, of the exact accomplishment of what was prophesied concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. But our Lord had also foretold the long-continued desolation of the temple. And we cannot forbear mentioning the awful sanction which was given to that part of the prediction. For it is well known, that a heathen historian has assured us, that when Julian the apostate, in deliberate contempt of that prediction, solemnly and resolutely undertook to rebuild it; his impious design was frustrated miraculously, again and again; the workmen being consumed by globes of fire, which broke out from the foundations.

The prediction of St. Paul concerning the man of sin, and the apostacy of the latter times, is also well worthy of our remark; and though a great part of the book of Revelations be still concealed under a dark veil, yet the division of the Roman empire into ten kingdoms, the usurpation, persecution, and idolatry of the Romish church, and the long duration of the papal power with several other extraordinary events, which no human prudence could have foreseen, and which have happened long since the publication of that book, are so clearly foretold there, that we cannot but look on that part of the Scripture as an invaluable treasure: and it is not at all improbable, that the more visible accomplishment of some of its other prophecies, may be a great means of reviving the Christian cause, which is at present so much on the decline.

The preservation of the Jews, as a distinct people, is another particular, under this head, which well deserves our attentive regard.

'Tis plain that they are very numerous, notwithstanding all the slaughter and destruction of this people in former and latter ages. They are dispersed among various and most distant nations, and particularly in those parts of the world where Christianity is professed; and though they are exposed to great hatred and contempt on account of their different faith, and in most places subject to civil incapacities, if not to unchristian severities; yet they are still most obstinately tenacious of their religion: which is the more wonderful, as their fathers were so prone to apostatize from it; and as most of them seem to be utter strangers entirely to piety or humanity, and pour the greatest contempt on the moral precepts of their own law, while they are so attached to the ceremonial institutions of it, troublesome and inconvenient as they are. Now let us seriously reflect, what an evident hand of Providence is here;—that by their dispersion, preservation, and adherence to their religion, it should come to pass,

that Christians should daily see the accomplishment of many remarkable prophecies concerning this people; and that we should always have amongst us such a crowd of unexceptionable witnesses to the truth of those ancient Hebrew records, on which so much of the evidence of the Gospel depends: records which are many of them so full to the purpose for which we allege them, that, as a celebrated writer very well observes, "Had it been represented that the whole body of the Jewish nation had been converted to Christianity, men would certainly have thought the assertion had been forged by Christians; and have looked upon them in the same light with the prophecies of the Sybils, as made many years after the event which they pretended to foretel."

And to add no more here, the preservation of the Jews as a distinct people, evidently leaves room for the accomplishment of those Old and New Testament prophecies, which relate to their national conversion and restoration: whereas that would be impossible in itself, or at least impossible to be known, if they were promiscuously blended with other people. On the whole, it is such a scene in the conduct of Providence, as we are well assured, cannot be paralleled in the history of any other nation upon earth: and affords a most obvious and important argument in favour of the Gospel,

Thus has Christianity been further confirmed since its publication, by what God has done to establish it. It only remains that we consider,

2. What confirmation it receives from the methods which its enemies have taken to destroy it.

And these have generally been, either persecution, or falsehood, or cavilling at some particulars in the revelation, without entering into the grand argument on which it is built, and fairly debating what is offered in its defence. Now who would not think the better of a cause for being thus attacked?

At first it is known, that the professors, and especially the preachers of the Gospel, were severely persecuted. In every city, bonds and imprisonments awaited them. As soon as ever the apostles began to preach Jesus and his resurrection, the Jewish rulers laid hold on them; and having confined and scourged them, strictly prohibited their speaking any more in his name. A little while after Stephen was murdered; and afterwards James and some other of the apostles. Now certainly such a conduct evidently betrayed a consciousness that they were not able to answer the apostles, and to support their own cause by the fair methods of reason and argument, to which, so far as the history informs us, they made no pretence, but attempted to bear them down by dint of authority, and to silence them by brutal force.

It would be needless to attempt showing particularly how these unrighteous methods were pursued in succeeding ages and distant countries. The savage cruelties of Nero to these innocent and holy men were such as raised the pity even of their enemies. Yet this was one of the least extensive and destructive of the ten general persecutions, which arose in the Roman empire, besides several others in the neighbouring countries, of which ecclesiastical history informs us.

These early enemies of the Gospel added falsehood and slander to their inhumanities. They endeavoured to murder the reputations of Christians, as well as their persons; and were not ashamed to represent them as haters of the whole human species, for no imaginable reason but that they would not associate themselves in their idolatrous worship. Nay, they charged them with human sacrifices, incest, idolatry, and all the crimes for which themselves and their false gods were indeed justly detestable: but from which the Christians knew how to vindicate themselves, highly to their own honour, and the everlasting reproach of these malignant and pestilent accusers. And they have not failed to do it in many noble apologies, which through the divine Providence are transmitted to us, and are incomparably the most valuable of any ancient uninspired writings.

Such were the infamous, the scandalous methods, by which the Gospel was opposed in the earliest ages of the church; and it must be added, that the measures more lately taken to subvert it, especially among ourselves, seem rather to reflect a glory on it. The unhappy enemies of the Gospel of the Son of God have been told again and again, that we put the proof of it on plain facts. They themselves do not and cannot deny, that it prevailed early in the world, as we have shown at large. There must have been some man or body of men who first introduced it; and even themselves, notwithstanding all their obstinacy and perverseness, generally confess that Christ and his apostles were the persons; which is a manifest acknowledgment of the most forcible argument they can give against their own debased principles.

Now which of these schemes will the unbelievers take? It seems that the deists of the present age fix on neither, as being secretly conscious they cannot support either; but they content themselves with cavilling at some circumstances attending the revelation, without daring to encounter its grand evidence; that is, they have been laboriously attempting to prove it to be improbable, or absurd, to suppose that to have been, which nevertheless plainly appears to have been facts. One of them most weakly and sophistically attempts to prove, in defiance of the common sense of mankind, that *the light of nature is a perfect*

rule, and therefore, that all revelation is needless, and indeed impossible. Another disguises the miracles of Christ by false representations of them, and then treats them as idle tales. A third takes a great deal of fruitless pains to show, that some prophecies referred to in the New Testament are capable of another sense, different from that in which the apostles have taken them.

These things have been set in a very artful and fallacious light by persons, whose names will perhaps be transmitted to posterity with the infamous stigma of having been leaders in the cause of infidelity: but not a man of them undertakes to ascertain the grand fact. Nay, they generally take no more notice of the positive evidences by which it is even demonstrated, than if they had never heard it proposed; though they cavil at incidental passages in those books in which it is most clearly stated. And as for what they have urged, though perhaps some who were before weary of Christianity, may have taken occasion to reject it, and others for want of consulting the answers to them, may have been unwarily ensnared; yet the examination of these points has been greatly for the honour and vindication of the truth, which seems on this occasion to have been set in a clearer and stronger light than ever, at least in these latter ages.

The cause of Christianity has greatly gained by debate, and the Gospel comes like fine gold out of the furnace, which the more it is tried, the more it is approved. It must be owned, that the defenders of the Gospel have appeared with very different degrees of ability for the work; nor could it be otherwise among such numbers of them: but, on the whole, though the patrons of infidelity have been masters of wit, humour, and address, as well as of a moderate share of learning, and generally much more than a moderate share of assurance; yet so great is the force of truth, that (unless we may except those writers who have unhappily called for the aid of the civil magistrate in the controversy) we cannot recollect to have seen any defence of the Gospel, which has not, on the whole, been sufficient to establish it, notwithstanding all the sophistical arguments of its subtle antagonists.

This is an observation that is continually gaining new strength, as new assaults are made upon the Gospel; and we cannot forbear saying, that if it were by a kind of judicial infatuation, some who have distinguished themselves in the wretched cause of infidelity, have been permitted to fall into such gross misrepresentations, such senseless inconsistencies, such palpable falsehoods, and in a word, into such various and malignant *superfluity of naughtiness*, that to a wise and pious mind, they must appear like those venomous creatures,

which are said to carry an antidote in their own objections, particularly a noble Lord, who has given up several of the deistical objections, and even acknowledged the divine original of the Gospel; for he asserts, "That no religion ever appeared in the world, whose natural tendency was so much directed to promote the peace and happiness of mankind." He declares, that "No system can be more simple and plain than that of a natural religion as it stands in the Gospel." He avers, that, "he will not say, that the belief that Jesus was the Messiah, is the only article of belief necessary to make men Christians. There are other things doubtless contained in the revelation he made of himself, dependent on, and relative to this article, without the belief of which I suppose our charity would be very defective. But this I say, that the system of religion which Christ published, and his evangelists recorded, is a complete system to all the purposes of religion, natural and revealed. It contains all the duties of the former, it enforces the whole law of faith, promising rewards and threatening punishments, which he declares he will distribute when he comes to judge the world." The same writer alloweth that the Gospel is in all cases one continued lesson of the strictest morality, of justice, of benevolence, and of universal charity. He professeth a great concern for true charity, in opposition to theology, and says, that "genuine Christianity was taught of God." And not to multiply passages to this purpose, he pronounces, that "the Christian system of faith and practice was revealed of God himself, and it is absurd and impious to assert, that the divine Being revealed it incompletely and imperfectly. Its simplicity and plainness show, that it was designed to be the religion of mankind, and also manifest the divinity of its original." After reading these quotations and a great variety of others, which might be produced from his Lordship's writings, the reader may easily judge what religion has to fear from this noble writer's arguments, and we will venture to assert, that he has himself entirely confuted his own objections.

Thus have we given the reader a brief view of the chief arguments in proof of Christianity, and the sum of the whole is this:

The Gospel is probable in theory, as considering the nature of God and the circumstances of mankind, there was reason to hope a revelation might be given; and if any were given, we should naturally apprehend its internal evidence would be such as that of the Gospel is, and its external such as it is said to be. But it is also true in fact; for Christianity was early professed, as it was first introduced by Jesus of Nazareth, whose life and doctrines were published by his immediate at-

tendants, whose books are still preserved in the original language, and, in the main, are faithfully translated into our own; so that the books of the New Testament now in use, may be depended upon as written by the persons whose names they bear; and admitting this, the truth of the Gospel follows by a train of very easy consequences: for the authors certainly knew the truth of the facts they related; and considering what appears in their character and circumstances, we can never believe they would have attempted to deceive us; for if they had, they could not have gained credit in the world: but they did gain it in a very remarkable manner; therefore the facts they attested were true, and the truth of the Gospel evidently follows from the certainty of those facts, and is completely confirmed by what has happened in the world since the publication of it.

This is the sum of what we flatter ourselves we have sufficiently proved; and shall now conclude what we have to say on this subject, with a few words by way of reflection.

1. Let us gratefully acknowledge the divine goodness, in favouring us with so excellent a revelation, and confirming it to us by such ample evidence.

We should daily adore the God of nature, for lighting up the sun, that glorious, though imperfect image of his own unapproachable lustre; and appointing it to gild the earth with its various rays, to cheer us with its benign influences, and to guide and direct us in our journeys and our labours. But how incomparably more valuable is that "day-spring from on high, which hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet in the way of peace?" Oh ye Christians, whose eyes are so happy to see, and your ears to hear, what reason have you for daily and hourly praise! When your minds are delighted with contemplating the riches of Gospel grace, when you view with wonder and joy, the harmonious system of your redemption; when you feel the burden of your guilt removed, the freedom of your address to the throne of Grace encouraged, and see the prospect of a fair inheritance to eternal glory opening upon you; then, in the pleasing transports of your souls, borrow the joyful anthem of the psalmist, and say, with the humblest gratitude and self-resignation, "God is the Lord who showeth us light; bind the sacrifice with cords even to the horns of the altar." Adore "God who first commanded the light to shine out of darkness," that by the discoveries of his word, and the operations of his Spirit, he hath "shined in your hearts to give you the knowledge of his glory, as reflected from the face of his Son." Let us all adore him, that this revelation hath reached us, who live in an age and country so distant from that in which it first appeared; while there are to thi

very day, not only dark corners, but regions of the earth, that "are full of the habitations of idolatry and cruelty."

Let us peculiarly address ourselves to those whose education and circumstances of life have given them opportunities of a fuller inquiry into the state of those ancient or modern nations, that have been left merely to the light of unassisted reason; even to those who are unacquainted with the history of their gods, the rites of their priests, the tales and even the hymns of their poets; nay, we will add, the reasoning of the sagest philosophers; all the precious and all the erroneous things they have said where religion and immortality are concerned. It may be imagined, that God gave to some of the most celebrated pagan writers that uncommon share of genius and eloquence, that they might, as it were, by their art, embalm the monsters of antiquity; that so succeeding ages might see in a more affecting view than we could otherwise have done, how weak the human mind is in its best estate, and the need which the greatest as well as the meanest of mankind have of being taught by a revelation from above. While we are daily conversing with such monuments as these, and are also surveying the evidences of Christianity, in a large and more distinct view than it was possible for us here to suppose them, we are under peculiar obligations to be very thankful for the Gospel ourselves, as well as to compassionate the cause of those to whom it has never been offered, or by whom it is slighted. And this leads us to another reflection.

2. What reason have we to pity those who reject this glorious Gospel, even when they have opportunities of inquiring into its clearest evidences?

Such undoubtedly we have in our own age and nation: and surely we should sometimes bestow a compassionate thought upon them, and lift up humble prayers for them, that God, peradventure, may give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are now led captive by him at his pleasure; we should pity heathens and Mahomedans under their darkness and errors; but how much more deplorable is the case of those, who though they dwell in Emmanuel's land, and in the valley of Zion, turn it into the valley of the shadow of death, by closing their eyes against so bright a lustre, and stopping their ears against the voice of the charmer? They are, indeed, in their own conceit, the only wise people, but their wisdom will die with them: so that to be sure, they will scorn our pity. But who can forbear it? Is there a more melancholy thought than this, that the Son of God should have done so much to introduce and establish the Gospel, and his Spirit so much to perpetuate and increase its evidence; and that after all it should be con-

temptuously despised, even by creatures who are perishing without it? This is not only done, though we believe most frequently, by men of profligate and abandoned lives; but sometimes by persons who have the appearance of external morality, decency, and humanity, (for such are to be found among them,) as well as men of wit and genius, of politeness and learning, of human prudence and experience in worldly affairs. It may also be added, that it is the case of some who were the children of pious parents, who were trained up in religious exercises, who once discovered serious impressions, and gave very encouraging hopes. Alas, whither are they fallen? How shall we shelter those that were once our brethren, that are perhaps still our friends, from the awful sentence which the Gospel denounces against all that reject it without any exception? As to the wretches that add insult and derision to their infidelity, we tremble to think of that load of guilt which they are bringing upon themselves; and how near their approach to the unpardonable sin, if they have not already committed it. For the rest, who behave in a more modest and sober manner, it will no doubt be a very difficult task to convince them; and so much the rather, as some of them, by too easy a transition, have renounced many of the most important principles of natural religion: nay, it might be added, even the whole of it, together with the Christian revelation. But the influences of divine grace are almighty. Let us recommend them to it, and omit no other proper method, either of recovering such as are already seduced; or at least of securing those who are not yet infected, but may be, as most of the youth are, especially in the most populous places, in imminent danger of the contagion. To this end let us add,

3. How reasonable it is, that Christians should form a familiar acquaintance with the great evidences of our common faith.

It is what we so apparently owe to the honour of God, to the interest of Christ, to the peace of our own souls, and the edification of others, that we hope we need not urge it at large, especially considering what has been said before. In consequence of all, let it be your care to make the evidences of Christianity the subject of your serious reflection and frequent converse. Especially study your Bibles, where such marks of truth and divinity are to be found, that we hope few who have familiarly known them and have had a relish for them, were ever brought to make a shipwreck of their faith as it is in Jesus. Above all, let it be your care, to act on the rules which are here laid down: and then you will find your faith growing in a happy proportion, and experience the truth of our Saviour's declaration, that if any man resolutely and faithfully do his will,

he shall know of the Christian doctrine, whether it be of God. We verily believe, that it is the purity of its precepts which lies at the bottom of most men's opposition to it; or a natural pride of heart, which gives them an aversion to it; or a fond affectation of seeming wiser than others, in rejecting what most of their neighbours do profess to believe. When these unhappy prejudices and conceptions are, by divine grace, conquered and rooted out, the evidence of truth will daily appear with increasing lustre: as the light of the sun does to an eye recovering from the film with which it hath been overgrown; and which before had veiled it with midnight in the midst of noon.

4. How solicitous should we be to embrace and obey that Gospel, which comes attended with such abundant evidences!

We may undoubtedly address ourselves to most of our readers, and say as Paul did to King Agrippa: "Believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest:" yet let me entreat and charge you not to rest here; but attentively to examine how far your hearts are affected, and your lives regulated by such a belief. The Christian revelation is a practical thing; and is heard, believed, and professed in vain, if it be not obeyed.

In this Gospel "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness of men:" but it is revealed with redoubled fury against that audacious sinner, "who holds the truth in unrighteousness." In this Gospel the blessed Jesus is exalted, both as a "Prince and Saviour;" and it is not with impunity, that the impenitent rebel can reject his yoke, and trample on his blood. What must they expect, who have poured contempt on such a Sovereign, and on such a Redeemer?

Let it be earnestly and frequently recollected, that this Gospel is the touchstone by which we are one day to be tried; the balance in which an impartial judge will weigh us: and must, on the whole, prove our everlasting triumph, or our everlasting torment. The Almighty did not introduce it with such solemn notice, such high expectation, such pompous miracles, such awful sanctions, that men might reject or dishonour it at pleasure; but it will certainly be found, to the greatest and meanest of those that hear it, "a savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death."

Let it therefore be your immediate care to inquire, which of these it is likely to prove to your souls; remember it is so far from being a vain thing, that it is really your very life. If it has been hitherto despised, and that blessed Redeemer in whom it so evidently centres, has been neglected, assure yourselves, that all we have said in confirmation of its truth, proves only, that the "hand-writing of God" is set to your condemnation. Allow yourselves, therefore, not a moment's rest, till you have

with humble submission applied to his throne, while there is yet hope that it may be reversed.

And for you who have hitherto believed and obeyed the Gospel, let it be your care to defend and adorn it: "be blameless and harmless, the children of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, shining among them as lights in the world:" perhaps your example may not only serve to entertain their eyes, but "to guide their feet into the way of peace," and engage them also to join with you in "glorifying your Father which is in heaven;" above all, be careful to hold fast the form of sound words, and to adorn the doctrine of your blessed Saviour in all things.

THE

HISTORY

OF THE

LIFE OF OUR BLESSED LORD AND SAVIOUR

JESUS CHRIST.

CHAPTER 1.

Presage of the Birth of Christ.—Prediction of the Birth of John the Baptist.—Salutation of the Blessed Virgin by the Angel.—Visitation of the Virgin Mary to Elizabeth.—Birth of the Baptist.

No event that ever did, or perhaps will happen, can more remarkably display the wisdom and power of the GREAT JEHOVAH, than the glorious manner in which he brought life and immortality to light, by the Gospel of his only Son, manifested in the flesh.

History, as it refers merely to human events, is a pleasing and instructing subject; but that which relates to our immortal interest, certainly claims our most serious regard.

The mind of man cannot be more delightfully employed, than in the contemplation of the wisdom and goodness of the omnipotent Creator of the universe, who, by means the least thought of and imagined, confirmed and established that glorious Gospel, on which depend all the sinner's hopes of eternal salvation. Notwithstanding the strength and number of its enemies, the church of Christ grew, from the most inconsiderable beginnings, to an immense fabric or building in the Lord; nor shall the united efforts of earth and hell be able to prevail against it. As it was planted, so it was reared, by an Almighty Hand, which, like the careful husbandman, pruned and cultivated each tender sprig, till it arrived at full perfection; or, to use the words of our blessed Lord, "The least of all seeds grew up and waxed a great tree, and spread out its branches, and filled the earth."

Thus prevailed eternal truth; nor could the inveterate Jews, or superstitious heathens, resist its progress; though Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Israel

"gathered themselves together against the Lord, and against his anointed; for the doctrine of God confounded the wisdom of the one, and overcame the folly of the other.

If we survey the stupendous works of the creation, we shall find that few arrived at perfection at once. This observation is amply confirmed by the various productions in the natural, and changes in the moral world. The Supreme Being, who conducts all his operations according to his infinite wisdom, appears to have retained the same maxim in regulating his kindest dispensations to the sons of men. The divine will was not revealed at first, in its clearest evidence and fullest splendour. The dawn, in a spiritual as well as in a natural sense, preceded the meridian glory; the former revelation was but a type or earnest of the latter, and, in comparison with it intricate and mysterious.

The all-gracious God, as it seemed best to his unerring wisdom, was pleased, by degrees, to open and unfold his glorious counsels; and man, by degrees, attained to the knowledge of the great plan of salvation, and the means used by its great Author to promote and establish it.

Some time before the incarnation of the blessed Jesus, an opinion prevailed among the pious part of the Jews, that the great Jehovah would condescend to favour them with a clear revelation of his divine will, by the mission of some eminent person, qualified from above, to instruct them in the same. This opinion was founded, on the predictions of the ancient prophets, who had described, with the utmost beauty and clearness, the person, character, and glory of the Messiah, appointed by God, in his own good time, to declare his eternal counsels to mankind.

Relying on the fulfilment of these prophecies, the devout persons among the Jews imagined the time appointed by God near at hand, and that the promised Messiah would shortly make his appearance, and therefore are said to have "waited night and day for the consolation of Israel." These people, at that time grievously oppressed by the Roman power, and consequently anxious of regaining their liberty, as well as revenging themselves on their tyrannical oppressors, waited the accomplishment of the prophecies with the most solicitous desire. But this opinion of the approach of a general deliverer extended much farther than the country of the Jews; for through their connexions with so many countries, their disputes with the learned men among the heathens, and the translation of the Old Testament into a language now almost general, their religion greatly prevailed in the east; and, consequently, their opinion that a prince would appear in the kingdom of Judea, who would dispel the mists of ignorance, deliver the Jews from the Roman

yoke and spread his dominion from one end of the world to the other.

While the eastern world was fraught with these sanguine hopes, the angel Gabriel, who had appeared to Daniel the prophet, with certain information as to the period of the Messiah's coming, as well as his transactions in this lower world, was sent to Zacharias, a pious priest, while he was executing his office before God, in the order of his course, (which was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord,) to foretel that a child should spring from him and his wife Elizabeth, though they were stricken in years, who should be endowed with extraordinary gifts from heaven, and honoured with being the forerunner of the Saviour of the world.

Zacharias, when he saw the angel, though he knew him to be of heavenly extraction, could not judge the subject of his mission, and therefore discovered a mixture of fear and surprise; but the heavenly ambassador cheered his desponding soul with this kind address: "Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John." That he waited day and night for the consolation of Israel, he well knew, which is all we can understand by his prayer being heard; for it was unnatural for him to think that he and his wife Elizabeth, who were advanced in years, should have a son; nay, he intimates his doubt concerning it in these words: "Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years." Besides, he was a priest of the course of Abiah, whose particular office was to pray in behalf of the people, for public and national blessings; so that it is very reasonable to think, that on all occasions of public worship, he prayed most earnestly for the accomplishment of the prophecies relative to the appearance of the long-expected Messiah, who was promised as a general blessing to all the nations of the earth.

That this was the great subject of his prayer, appears from the declaration of Gabriel: The prayer thou hast directed with sincerity to an almighty ear, concerning the coming of the Messiah, is heard; "and behold thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son," who shall prepare the way for the mighty Redeemer of Israel. The old priest, indeed, was as much astonished at the subject of the mission, as he was at the appearance of the messenger; and esteeming it impossible that his wife, thus advanced in years, should conceive a son, weakly demanded a sign, to confirm his belief in the fulfilment of the promise, though he knew the authority of the angel was derived from the God of Truth. But as it is the lot of humanity to err, Zacharias had, from that time, forgot that nothing was impossible to Omnipotence, as well as that it was not the first time the aged were

caused to conceive, and bear a child. The least reflection would have reminded him, that Sarah conceived and bore Isaac, when she was far advanced in years; and that Samuel was born of a woman, who had been for a long time reputed, and even called *barren*.

His curiosity was, indeed, gratified, but in a manner that carried with it, at once, a confirmation of the promise, and a punishment of his unbelief. As he had verbally testified his doubt of the fulfilment of the prediction of the angel, he was punished with the loss of his speech, which was to continue to the very day in which the prediction should be accomplished: "Behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season."

Zacharias soon received an awful testimony of the divinity of the mission of Gabriel, who was no sooner departed, than he was struck dumb; for when he came to pray, in the course of his office, during the oblation of his incense, he could not utter a word, and was under the necessity of making signs to the people, that an angel had appeared to him in the temple, and that he was deprived of the faculty of speech, as a punishment for his doubting the fulfilment of an event which had been foretold concerning him.

Soon after Zacharias departed to his own house, (the days of his ministration being accomplished,) his wife Elizabeth, according to the prediction of the angel, conceived, and retired into a private place, where she lived five months in the uninterrupted exercises of piety, devotion, and contemplation on the mysterious providence of the Almighty, and his amazing goodnesss to the sinful children of men.

When Elizabeth was advanced six months in her pregnancy, the same heavenly ambassador was sent to a poor virgin, called Mary, who lived in obscurity in Nazareth, under the care of Joseph, to whom she was espoused. This man and woman were both lineally descended from the house of David, from whose loins it was foretold the great Messiah should spring.

This virgin being ordained by the Most High to be the mother of the great Saviour of the world, was saluted by the angel in the most respectful terms: "Hail! thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women!" Such an address from so exalted a being, greatly alarmed the meek and humble virgin, to allay whose fear, and encourage whose heart, the angel related, in the most rapturous terms, the subject of his embassy, which was to assure her, that she was chosen by God to the greatest honour which could be conferred on a mortal, and which would perpetuate her memory; an honour no less than that of being the mother of the promised and long

expected Messiah, who upon earth shall be called JESUS, because he should save his people from their sins, be the restorer of human nature, and the procuring cause of eternal bliss to sinners, who had forfeited the favor, and incurred the resentment of an offended God: that this divine person was to be considered as the Son of the most high God; to whom should be given by his Almighty Father the throne of David his earthly father, on which he should preside, and which, being the whole church of Christ, the house of Jacob, the spiritual Israel, or the kingdom of the Messiah, should continue for ever and ever.

The astonished virgin, unmindful, likewise, that Isaiah had long since prophesied, "That a virgin should conceive, and bear a son," thought her virginity an insurmountable barrier to the fulfilment of the prophecy, especially as such an event had never occurred since the creation of the world, and therefore required of the angel an explanation of the manner in which such a circumstance could be effected.

This desire by no means implies her not remembering, that with God all things were possible, but only serves to prove the weakness of her apprehension on the one hand, or her diffidence and sense of her own unworthiness on the other.

The angel, therefore, perceiving the goodness of her disposition, notwithstanding some little proof of human weakness, and shortness of sight, vouchsafed an immediate answer to her inquiry. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall cover thee;" or, in other words, this miraculous event shall be brought about by the aid of the Holy Spirit, and wonderful exertion of the power of the Most High. As thy conception is effected by the immediate interposition of the Holy Ghost, "Therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." To confirm her faith in the glorious message, the heavenly messenger observed to her, that her cousin Elizabeth, notwithstanding her advanced years, and reputed barrenness, was above six months pregnant, assigning this incontestible argument for the miraculous incident, "For with God nothing shall be impossible."

This reply not only removed all her doubts and fears, but filled her with inexpressible joy, so that she even anticipated the promised felicity; for she, with the rest of the daughters of Jacob, had long indulged a hope of being selected by God to be the honored mother of the Saviour of Israel; and therefore, on her being assured that such happiness was destined her by the Great Disposer of all events, she thus expressed her reliance on the fulfilment of the divine promise, and perfect acquiescence in the pleasure of the Almighty: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord! be it unto me according to thy word."

The angel had no sooner departed, than Mary set out for the mountainous country of Judea, though at a very remote distance from Nazareth, in order to rejoice with her cousin Elizabeth in the joyful news she had received from the angel concerning her. The rapture and delight which filled the minds of Mary and Elizabeth, on the occasion of this salutation, can alone be expressed from the affecting description recorded by the evangelist Luke, who is peculiar for the beauty of his style, and elegance of his expressions.

That evangelist writes, that the salutation of Mary had such an effect upon Elizabeth, that on hearing the miraculous event which had befallen the virgin, the babe leaped within her, and that she, being inspired with holy delight on the approaching prospect of the nativity of her Saviour, exclaimed with rhapsody, "And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" *Luke* i. 43. Nor did her ecstasy cease with this token of humility and joy on the important event, in the ardor of which she evinced that prophetic influence, which, while it amazed the blessed virgin, could not fail of establishing her belief in what the angel had foretold; for she repeated the very words expressed by the angel, in his salutation of the holy virgin, "Blessed art thou among women;" together with a quotation from the Psalms, "and blessed is the fruit of thy womb."

For as Mary conceived the seed long promised and earnestly desired, the seed in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, he could not but be blessed himself, according to the words of the psalmist: "His name shall continue as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed." The happy virgin, catching the holy flame from the aged Elizabeth, broke out into an humble acknowledgment of her unworthiness, and the wonderful grace of the Almighty, in appointing her to the exalted honor of bearing in her womb the Redeemer of Israel, in those known words, "My soul doth magnify the Lord," &c.

Thus having, by this visit, confirmed herself in the belief of the prediction of the angel Gabriel, when the period of Elizabeth's pregnancy approached, she returned to Nazareth, having resided in Judea about three months.

Soon after the departure of Mary, Elizabeth brought forth her son, the appointed harbinger of the King of Glory: and on the eighth day after his birth, according to the Judaical custom, he was circumcised, and called, according to the appointment of the angel, *John*, alluding, in the Hebrew tongue, to the gracious display of the wisdom and goodness God was about to manifest to the world, by the spreading of the Gospel of his Son of whom this John was the appointed forerunner.

THE ANNUNCIATION.

page 47.

"And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God."—LUKE I. 35.

The promise being thus fulfilled, the aged priest was restored to his speech, and immediately broke out into praise and rapture at the marvellous works of God, in strains which astonished all around him. This surprising event greatly alarmed the people of the adjacent country, who were divided in their opinions concerning a child, whose birth was attended with so many extraordinary circumstances. Indeed, these incidents were worthy of general admiration; that he who was to be the forerunner of the mighty Saviour of Israel, should not make his entrance on life in an obscure and common manner, but with particular tokens of the favor of heaven, in order to attract the observation of his countrymen, and excite their attention to that ministry which he was called to by God, even the preparation of the people for the reception of the Messiah, who was shortly to appear in the flesh.

It is observable, that the Baptist, from his infancy, displayed great qualities, both of mind and body; for such was his strength of constitution, through the blessing of the God of nature, that he lived till near the thirtieth year of his age, when his public ministry began, in the mountains and desert country of Judea, bereft of almost all the comforts of life. But at length the prophecy of the good old Zacharias, relating to his future elevation, was literally fulfilled: "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people, by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercies of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us; to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death; to guide our feet in the way of peace."

As Joseph had abstained from all matrimonial intercourse with his wife, he was not a little alarmed, when, shortly after her return to Nazareth, she discovered evident signs of pregnancy; nay, so far was he wrought on by this circumstance, that he absolutely resolved on a dissolution of the marriage; but previous to such a rigorous procedure, questioning her concerning the same, she, to wipe off so foul an aspersion, minutely related to him the particulars of the vision from the angel, and the extraordinary event that had befallen Zacharias and Elizabeth.

Notwithstanding this ingenuous declaration, Joseph's suspicions continued, and suggested to him, that this might be a device, concerted by the friends of Mary, to exempt her from that disgrace, which must attend a divorce on such pretence; however, he resolved to execute his purpose as privately as possible, and without assigning the cause of the same, which, under their constitution, would have subjected her to the penalty

of death. But, on cooler reflection, he called to mind the sove reign power of Omnipotence; for which reason, however opposite her case might be to the nature of things in general, her vindication of herself might be well grounded. He now thought himself bound by every tie of justice and duty, to preserve her character inviolable; though as he was a just man, and a most religious observer of the law, the assertions she made, did not appear to him sufficient to justify him in retaining her in his house. While he was thus ruminating on this interesting event, he was overtaken with a pleasing slumber, and received a communication from above, which fully revealed the cause and manner of Mary's pregnancy, dispelled his doubts, and encouraged him to take home his falsely-suspected spouse; "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost."

The pious Joseph complied with the voice of heaven most cheerfully; for no sooner did the morning dawn appear, than he arose from his couch, and obeyed the commands of the Most High, by relating to his wife his being assured of her innocence, and immediately restored her to former favor.

While he related to her the manner of this extraordinary revelation, by a messenger from the heavenly Canaan, he discovered in her a remarkable chastity of heart, entirely conformable to so mysterious an operation, and knew her not till she had brought forth the great Redeemer of Israel.

Thus was fulfilled that which was foretold by the prophets; and particularly the prediction of Isaiah, which imported that a virgin should bring forth a son—"Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel," (*Isaiah*, vii. 14.) which being interpreted, is, God with us.

CHAPTER II.

General decree for taxation published.—The Birth of Christ.—Declaration of the same to the Shepherds.—Circumcision, and presentation of Christ in the Temple.—The Wise Men of the East worship the Holy Child.—Flight of Joseph into Egypt.—Massacre of Infants at Bethlehem.—Death of Herod.—Return of Joseph out of Egypt.

Augustus Cæsar, the Roman Emperor, having at this time, issued an edict for a general taxation on all the nations, cities, and towns subject to the empire, King Herod, in consequence,

of that decree, commanded all under his government to muster in the city of his people, or place of his descent, that an estimate might be taken of their persons and effects. Pursuant to this order, Joseph and Mary, as descendants from the line of David, departed from Nazareth where they then resided, and came to Bethlehem, a city of Judea, the place of the nativity of David and his ancestors.

So numerous were the people that repaired to this place, on account of the general decree, that every dwelling was occupied; and Joseph and Mary, though they could not depart thence till after the taxation, were forced to take up their residence in an humble stable, the spot in which it pleased the Divine Wisdom, should be born the Lord of Life and Glory, who, as a perfect example of humility to all his followers, was to make his entrance into, and his exit out of, the lower world, in a very mean and humble manner.

In this lowly tenement, the blessed virgin brought forth her first-born godlike Son, wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him (having no better place) in a manger.

It is remarkable, that all the generations of the intervening spaces, between three of the most remarkable periods, relative to the house of David, and the birth of our blessed Saviour, are exactly the same; for the Evangelist Matthew informs us, that all the generations, from Abraham to David, are fourteen generations; and from David unto the Babylonish captivity are fourteen generations; and from the Babylonish captivity unto the birth of Christ, are also fourteen generations. The same Evangelist also traces his genealogy from Abraham, and proves his direct lineal descent from that father of the faithful, through the line of David, from race to race, to that of the humble virgin and the aged Joseph. But to return to the immediate subject of our history.

The manner and place of our Lord's birth certainly demand our highest admiration and wonder, as a striking display of wisdom, both in the direction and accomplishment of the will of his heavenly Father. Considered in his Divine nature, heaven is the habitation of his seat, and the earth is his foot-stool; considered in his human nature, he is humbled beneath all, being confined within the narrow limits of a manger! Though, as the Son of God, he is "the brightness of his Father's glory, the express image of his person," and his "throne is for ever and ever!" as the son of man, O wondrous condescension! he is wrapped in the meanest swaddling clothes; and as man, he takes up his habitation with the beasts of the field. In fine, let us adore his grace and love, in divesting himself of those glories, for a time, which he enjoyed at the right hand of his Father, assuming our nature, and that in its humblest state,

in order to raise us to that degree of glory and happiness, which, by our apostacy from God, we had justly forfeited; exulting with the prophet, "Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth, and break forth into singing, O mountains, for the Lord hath comforted his people."

But the humble manner in which the blessed Jesus made his appearance in the world, did not long eclipse the glory of his descent; a heavenly messenger being despatched from above to apprize mankind of their Saviour's incarnation. It pleased the wise Disposer of all things, by this holy angel first to make known to some honest shepherds, who were watching their flocks by night in the neighboring fields, the birth of the long-promised, long-expected Messiah. The radiance which shone around them terrified the astonished peasants; but to dissipate their fears, and confirm their joys, the divine messenger interposed, and thus addressed them: "Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born, this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." *Luke*, ii. 10, &c.

The glorious news was no sooner proclaimed, than a number of the celestial choir were heard to resound the praises of the Almighty, for this transcendant display of his goodness to sinful men: "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." Transported with the happy tidings of the birth of the Redeemer of Israel, the angel no sooner departed, than the shepherds hastened to Bethlehem, in quest of the babe, whom, according to the information of the sacred missionary, they found wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger. This event, so exactly conformable to the angel's prediction, equally delighted and amazed them; nor could they conceal the purport of his mission. but published abroad all they had seen and heard.

Having viewed with praise and wonder their long-expected Saviour, and offered their grateful praises to God, for the manifestation of his goodness to mankind, they departed with hearts filled with love and gratitude, still glorifying the Almighty Parent of universal nature.

After the expiration of eight days from the birth of the holy infant, he was circumcised according to the Mosaic institution; and thus, by a few drops, gave earnest of the abundance of blood which he was to shed for the purification of mankind. The blessed Redeemer passed through this ceremony, not that he stood in any necessity of conforming to laws of any kind, being the supreme lawgiver, with respect to his exalted nature;

but as, considered in his humble state, "he was born of a woman, made under the law," and came, according to his own declaration, "to fulfil all righteousness," it was requisite he should conform to that custom which characterized the Jewish nation, and was one of the principal injunctions of the Mosaic law, under which he was born; in order to fulfil all that is spoken of him in the scriptures.

Besides, as all the promises made to Abraham were to be fulfilled in the Messiah, it was necessary he should receive the seal of circumcision, in order to prove his descent from the patriarch, concerning whom it was foretold, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." As a further reason for our Lord's compliance with this Jewish institution, we may urge the propriety of his finishing the former dispensation, by an exact adherence to its rules, as he was about to establish another, and much better, which could not be effected more fully, than by conforming to that sacrament, which was of divine injunction, and indispensably requisite to admission into the former.

As the same institution also required that every first-born son, without any regard to circumstance or family, should be presented to the Lord, in the temple, by delivering him into the hands of the priest, and paying five shekels, together with an offering, which, from the poorer sort, consisted of a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons; a ceremony in commemoration of the divine mercy in sparing the first-born in Israel, when those of Egypt, both men and beasts were destroyed; his parents having tarried at Bethlehem till the days of Mary's purification were fully accomplished, brought the child Jesus to Jerusalem, and there presented him in the temple to the Lord, in the manner just described, with the offering allowed to the poorer sort of people; a repeated instance of the exact obedience of the immaculate Jesus to the ceremonial law, as well as the poverty of his parents, though descended from a royal house.

During the presentation of the holy infant, there entered the temple a pious and venerable old man, named Simeon, who, with all the devout, had "waited day and night for the consolation of Israel," and to whom it had been revealed by the spirit of truth, that he should not depart this mortal life, till he had seen the Lord of life and salvation.

Accordingly it was signified to him by the Holy Ghost, at whose instance he came at the precise time into the temple, that the child there presented was the long expected Messiah, even the Redeemer of Israel. In an ecstasy of joy he embraced the heavenly infant in his arms, and broke out into this rhapsody: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation: which

thou hast prepared before the face of all people: a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." *Luke* ii. 29, &c.

The exultation of Simeon astonished the parents of our Lord; not as unworthy the divine subject of it, to whom are due strains superior to men or angels, but as evincing the old man's certain knowledge that the child was the promised Messiah, though he was an absolute stranger. But their surprise was soon removed by Simeon's saying unto Mary his Mother: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel;" or, in other words, this is the stumbling-block and rock of offence, which it was long foretold by God should be laid in Zion, and which should occasion the fall of many in Israel; for through the humble manner of his birth, and his abject state upon earth, he became despised and rejected of men; yet he is set for the rising again of many, who shall rely on his merits, and submit to his government.

Commentators are divided in their opinions concerning this old Simeon. Some think he was of the order of priests, and that he uttered the words cited above, while he was presenting the child to the Lord, in the office of his function. But as the Evangelist, who recites in a particular manner, the presentation of our blessed Lord, is silent on that head, it appears little more than conjecture.

Others affirm, he was Simon the Just, a disciple of the famous Hillel, the master of Gamaliel, under whom the apostle Paul was educated; and that while he was attempting to explain to the people that passage in the prophecy of Isaiah, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son," it was revealed to him, that he should see, with mortal eyes, the promised Messiah: and that on his beholding the child and his mother in the temple, he broke out into that well known rhapsody.—But this could not be, for Simon the Just lived till forty-one years after the death of Christ; and it has been affirmed by Eusebius that he was not above seventy when he died. Besides, it is remarkable, that the Almighty, at that time was pleased to reveal his will with respect to the Messiah, not to the great, the wise, and the learned, but to the poor and illiterate, such as Joseph a carpenter, Zacharias an ordinary priest, and a company of shepherds; therefore, as the point is not settled, we presume to offer it as our opinion, that this old man, to whom God was pleased to make so extraordinary a revelation concerning the Saviour of the world, was a plain man, rather eminent for the goodness of his heart, than the knowledge of his head; and who possessed more piety and devotion, than learning or earthly pomp.

A certain good prophetess, called Anna, who had a long time waited for the redemption of Israel, entering the temple at the instant in which Simeon exulted in the birth of the heavenly infant, and finding that he was the promised Messiah, likewise joined with him in praising God, and went forth and declared the glad tidings of salvation to all the faithful in those parts.

Having, in every respect, complied with the ceremonies and rites contained in the law of Moses, Joseph and Mary, with the child Jesus, entered into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth, but did not long abide there; for having adjusted their affairs, they returned again to Bethlehem, the place of our Lord's nativity.

This step seems to have been pursued in consequence of their opinion, that it was necessary in order to his being acknowledged the Messiah sent by God, that he should reside, some time, in the place of his birth. Whatever was their motive for removal, it is evident from Scripture, that while they were in Bethlehem, with their son, certain eastern philosophers, called Magi, or Wise Men, came in consequence of the appearance they had seen, to Jerusalem, and inquired for the King of the Jews; declaring they had seen his star in their own quarter, and were come to pay him the adorations due to his dignity.

Various conjectures have been formed by the learned concerning this star, which is said to have appeared in the east: some think that it was the spirit of God, others an angel, some a comet, others a luminary appearance, &c. A modern writer thinks it was the glory that surrounded the angels who had appeared to the shepherds at Bethlehem, on the night of the blessed Lord's nativity.

But notwithstanding these uncertain conjectures, the star answered the end designed, and directed the Magi to the spot where resided the Lord of life and glory. Some men, too wise to admit of the evidences from Revelation, have sceptically inquired, how these eastern Magi could arrive at any knowledge that the Jews expected the Messiah; and that, therefore, on the appearance of this new star in the firmament, how they should apprehend it pointed out the birth of the great Redeemer of Israel? The learned asserters of the Christian cause, in answer to these queries, observe, that an opinion of the approach of the Messiah's kingdom had long prevailed all over the ea[illegible] nay, this is declared in profane history, by Suetonius, Tacitus, and others.

The reason of this prevailing opinion is very obvious. The Jews conceived mighty expectations of the Messiah, from the many prophecies concerning him recorded in their own language; and the Arabians, from the prophecies to the same

import made to Abraham; it being certain that those people retained traditional knowledge of this promise, from the words of Balaam, who was an Arabian prophet: "There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall arise out of Israel," &c. which every impartial reader must acknowledge rather refers to the appearance of the Messiah, than any other incident whatever.

The other eastern nations derived their expectations of the Messiah from their commercial connexions with the Jews and Arabians, but more especially from the Jews, who being scattered over the whole country of the East, spread their religion wherever they went, which occasioned several Roman historians to take notice of the prevalence of that opinion.

Nay, the expectations of the Messiah being born in Judea, was strongly impressed on the minds of the followers of Zoroaster, who reformed the religion of the Persians, being a servant to the prophet Daniel, and particularly favored with revelations concerning the appearance of the Messiah.

From these considerations, it evidently appears that this opinion prevailed throughout the East; and that the Magi might with great reason, on the appearance of the star, repair to Jerusalem in quest of that promised Saviour of Israel.

But to leave this subject, as not immediately appertaining to our purpose. The whole city of Jerusalem was alarmed at the unexpected arrival of the Eastern Magi; an event which much perplexed the tyrant Herod, whose ambitious mind maintained the utmost aversion to the very thought of a rival or a competitor, and consequently could not brook a report that favored the news of the birth of the King of the Jews.

Disguising, however, his sentiments, he received the Magi with seeming respect, attended to the design of their errand with affected complacency, and to gratify their curiosity, summoned a general council, and demanded of them, where Christ should be born? The council kept him no longer in suspense, for well remembering that the prophets had particularly foretold the place of his birth, they replied to the demand of their monarch, "In Bethlehem of Juda;" and to confirm their answer, cited prophetic authority: And thou Bethlehem in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come a governor that shall rule my people Israel.—*Matt.* ii. 6. The tyrant king, in consequence of the reply from the supreme council of the nation, directed the Magi to Bethlehem, as the place according to ancient prophecy, designed for the honor of Christ's nativity, earnestly entreating them at the same time, immediately on their finding out the child, to send him word, that he might repair thither, and pay his adoration to him also.

THE ADORATION OF THE WISE MEN.

page 57.

"And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshiped him; and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts, gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."—MATT. II. 11.

But this was mere pretence, and vile hypocrisy; for so far was Herod from entertaining any religious regard for the infant Jesus, that he vowed in his heart to destroy him as soon as he should be found; looking on him as designed for a temporal prince, who would expel him, or his descendants, from the throne of Judea, instead of a prince whose kingdom was wholly spiritual, and whose throne was not to be established upon earth, but in the heavenly Jerusalem.

We cannot have a more convincing evidence of the divinity of our Saviour's mission, than his miraculous preservation from the designs of the ambitious Herod. The tyrant, in this case, acted with the utmost subtilty; he declined accompanying the wise men in person; nor did he even send attendants with them, who, under the guise of honoring them, might have secretly informed him of the abode of the Messiah.

However, the Magi having obtained the intelligence they sought in Jerusalem, set forward, under the guidance of the same star that conducted them from their own country, but had left them on their arrival in Judea, which was the cause of their directing their course to the capital, in order to seek that information, which, by the desertion of the star became requisite.—Thus it appears the design of the Almighty, in directing the eastern Magi to the capital of Judea, was, that the whole nation might be made acquainted with the cause of their journey.

Accordingly, they had no sooner proceeded from Jerusalem on their way to Bethlehem, than their kind conductor again appeared, went before them to the very city, and fixed on the habitation of the heavenly infant. Guided by this celestial conductor, they entered the house, and prostrating themselves at the sacred feet of their spiritual king, presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Having thus accomplished the design of the expedition, they proposed, according to promise, returning to Jerusalem; but being diverted from that intention by a dream, in which they were warned by God of Herod's design, they pursued another course, towards their own country, and by those means defeated his malicious purpose.

But it is natural and reasonable to suppose, that the end of the divine wisdom, in directing these eastern Magi to the kingdom of Judea to worship the child Jesus, was not merely to gratify the curiosity of the wise men, because the event promoted many other very important designs, some of which we shall mention.

It proved to succeeding ages, the great expectation the Gentiles formed of the appearance of the Messiah, and consequently established the truth of those prophecies, which related to that event, as well as excited in the minds of men the most sanguine hopes, and longing desires.

As these Magi doubtless reported, on their return to their own countrymen, the particulars they had heard and seen in the kingdom of Judea, relative to the Messiah, such report must certainly have promoted the belief of the gospel in those parts, when afterwards preached there by the apostles. The expedition of the wise men was the cause of the answer of the Sanhedrim, in which it was unanimously declared to be the opinion of all the Jewish Rabbis then living, that according to ancient prophecies, Bethlehem was the place appointed by the Almighty to give birth to the promised Messiah.

It also contributed to another valuable purpose, in that the offerings of the wise men procured a subsistence for the holy family in Egypt, whither they were soon after warned to fly, in order to escape the vengeance of the enraged king; for no sooner had the wise men departed from Bethlehem, than Joseph was warned by a heavenly messenger, of the barbarous purpose of Herod, and commanded to flee into Egypt, with the young child and his mother.

Joseph, in obedience to the Almighty's command, rose that very night, and fled into Egypt; "and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord, by the prophet: Out of Egypt have I called my Son." This prophecy, which is quoted from Hosea, seems originally to refer to the Israelites; though the Evangelist's reference will be amply justified, by considering that the Egyptian captivity alludes to the subjection of the Israelites to great hardships, and their deliverance from the same, by an Almighty hand.

Now, as the departure of the Holy family into Egypt, was in obedience to the divine command, in order to protect the Holy Jesus from the incensed Herod, the application of the prophet, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son," appears very just, as well as elegant. The King of Judea long waited, with the most earnest expectation, the return of the wise men, anxious to glut his full resentment on the innocent Jesus; till, from their long delay, he began to suspect a delusion, and that his designs were frustrated by some extraordinary interposition of Providence.

At length, irritated by disappointment, he resolved to accomplish by cruelty, a resolution he could not effect by art, and accordingly issued orders to a large party of soldiers to go throughout Bethlehem, and all the neighboring villages, and massacre all the children they could find therein that were two years old, and under; thinking that the infant Jesus, whom as a prince, he both envied and dreaded, would fall in the general slaughter.

But the heavenly missionary was sheltered from above; nor was the relentless king permitted to impede the design of an Almighty Creator.

However, the cities through which the soldiers carried the destructive sword, exhibited such scenes of horror and distress, as could not fail to thrill every soul not entirely lost to humanity: no sound was heard but the piercing cries of parents, the groans of expiring babes, and a general imprecation of vengeance on the merciless tyrant. But he did not long survive his cruel decree, being swept from his throne by a nauseous disease, to answer for his conduct at the bar of a tremendous Judge.

No description can paint the horror of such a scene of relentless cruelty in a more glaring light, than the verse quoted by the evangelist Matthew, from the prophet Jeremiah: "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, In Rama there was a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning. Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they were not."—This prophecy must not be understood literally, but descriptively, or as a figure used to display the horror of the scene, as there applied by the Evangelist, in which acceptation it has a peculiar beauty; representing Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob, buried many years ago, in the fields of Bethlehem, awakened by the cries of slaughtered infants, bursting even the chains of death, and lamenting the hapless fate of the murdered innocents which surrounded her.

The tyrant Herod being thus cut off from the face of the earth, Joseph was warned by a heavenly messenger to return to the land of Israel. The good old man obeyed the Almighty's command, and appears to have had a great desire of residing in Judea, and very probably in Bethlehem; but hearing that Herod was succeeded in his throne by his son Archelaus, and fearing that he might pursue the barbarous design of his father, he directed his course another way; but being warned again by a heavenly mission, he retired into Galilee, then under the government of a mild and benevolent prince, called Antipas, and took up his habitation at Nazareth, where the particular circumstances which attended the birth of the blessed Jesus, were not generally known. The evangelist affirms, that Joseph, with the infant and his mother, resided in Nazareth, where the holy Jesus spent his youth, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, He shall be called a Nazarene."

The advocates for infidelity, whose notice the smallest inaccuracy in the sacred scriptures have not escaped, have not failed to observe, that the Evangelist refers to what he cannot justify from any of the prophetical writings, in which there are no such words to be found, as "He shall be called a Nazarene." But be it known, that the Evangelist may, with

justice, be vindicated from impropriety, by reminding these sceptics, that though the very words are not to be found, the allusion is just, and consequently the application. This expression refers to the general contempt and ridicule in which the Israelites held the Galileans, and especially the Nazarenes, who were even despised by the Galileans themselves, insomuch that the word Nazarene became a term of reproach.

Now, as the prophets in general, foretold the disgrace and infamy through which the blessed Jesus should pass, they consequently foretold he should be called a Nazarene, or exposed to every token of contempt and ridicule, of which this appellation, at that time, was a remarkable instance.

It is evident, that our Lord's residing at Nazareth, tended, in a remarkable manner, to the fulfilment of those prophecies; because, in the course of his public ministry, he was frequently reproached with the same, and his countrymen often urged it as a reason for their disregard of his doctrine. But as the stubbornness of unbelief will never admit of conviction, we have therefore added these remarks, to confirm the faith of the Christian, rather than convince the obstinate infidel.

CHAPTER III.

State of our Lord's childhood, and private life.—His argument with the Jewish Doctors.—Mission, Character, and Doctrine of the Baptist.—Baptism of Christ, and visible descent of the Spirit on that solemnity.

The precise circumstances of our Lord's childhood and life, previous to his public ministry, cannot be ascertained from the writings of any of the Evangelists, which can alone be relied on as authentic. All we can gather from those inspired men is, that the faculties of his mind were enlarged in proportion to the growth of his body, insomuch that he arrived at the very perfection of heavenly wisdom.

As his parents were mean and poor, he had not the advantage of a finished education; and he seems to have received no other instruction than what his parents gave him, in conformity to the Jewish laws. But supernatural abilities amply compensated for the deficiency of natural acquirements,

and he gave instances, in his earliest years, of amazing penetration and consummate wisdom.

According to the Mosaic institution, his parents annually went up to Jerusalem; and when he arrived at the age of twelve years, carried him with them to that city, in order that he might early imbibe the precepts of religion and virtue. In this place the holy Jesus tarried, without the knowledge and consequently the consent of his parents, who departed with the rest that were going towards Galilee; and thinking that he was gone forward with some of their relations or acquaintance, they continued their journey, not doubting but they should overtake him on the road, or meet with him at the place they had appointed to lodge. But, on their arrival, not finding the child in the village, nor amongst their relations, they returned to Jerusalem, much troubled; and after a most anxious search of three days, found him in the temple, sitting among the learned doctors, who were amazed at the wisdom of his questions, and the pertinence of his replies, which were greatly superior to the utmost they could expect from one of his tender years, and his education.

These doctors, or expounders of the law, among the Jews, always taught the people publicly on the three great festivals, and it was on one of these public occasions that the blessed Jesus gave such manifest proofs of his wisdom and penetration as astonished all beholders, many of whom thought he must be something more than human. As, according to his own declaration, he was employed in his Father's business, it is natural to think, in the course of his disputes, he modestly corrected some of the errors which the Jewish doctors then taught, and which were repugnant to the principles of that religion he came to promote and establish.

The wonder of his parents, at finding him in such sublime employment, was beyond expression; though his pious mother, notwithstanding the pleasure which the discovery afforded her, could not help showing the concern which his absence, without their knowledge, had occasioned them, by addressing him thus: "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us! Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." To this question he replied, that their surprise at his absenting himself without their knowledge was groundless and absurd, as they might have been assured, from his extraordinary birth, and the wonderful circumstances attending it, that his Father was no less than the Almighty One of Israel; that he assumed human nature to promote his glorious designs; and, therefore, as his errand was of such moment, they must not imagine he could always reside with them. "How is it that ye sought me! Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

Though his parents did not clearly discern the force of this excellent remonstrance, his pious mother committed his words to memory, and together with Joseph her husband, joyfully returned with him to their poor dwelling at Nazareth, where he lived with them in dutiful subjection, and thereby afforded a noble example for the imitation of all children, who certainly are bound to yield obedience to their parents, since the Son of God himself, when on earth, has set them the pattern, by practising every branch of filial duty to his earthly parents.

The blessed Jesus continued in this lowly state for some time, during which he greatly advanced both in knowledge and stature; and by his extraordinary qualities, attracted the regard and admiration of all who either saw or heard him.

Being happily free from those inordinate disquieting desires, which disturb and distract mortals, he was always in temper calm and sedate, which added to a pleasant countenance, combined to prove the strength of his faculties, and the goodness of his disposition. He was also an excellent orator, being endowed with a most nervous and persuasive elocution, insomuch that his hearers, frequently astonished at the substance and manner of his address, would suddenly cry out, "Never man spake like this man." Though considered in his divine nature, he was so far superior to human nature, during the time in which he lived thus humbly with his parents, yet he condescended to work with his father at his trade of a carpenter, and thereby left us a shining example of industry.

Thus obscurely did the blessed Jesus live till the time of his public ministry; nor did he show any miracles, or perform any actions to distinguish him from the rest of mankind; his divine nature, and the annexed properties, during the time of his private life, being concealed under the veil of his human nature.

As this is the whole account collected from sacred history, concerning the childhood and private life of the blessed Jesus, the Saviour of mankind, we must content ourselves therewith, not seeking to indulge a curiosity, which such silence seems to forbid, as sinful and impertinent.

Many people, of more speculation than piety, may be induced to inquire the cause which prevented the Evangelists giving us an exact detail of the transactions of our blessed Saviour's life, from the twelfth year of his age till the time of his public ministry. To such we answer, that the design of the inspired writers being to instruct rather than amuse, they consulted our spiritual interest more than our humor and caprice; and that, therefore, the wisdom of God, by whose inspiration they wrote, demands our admiration, in that they passed over less important parts of our Saviour's life, which would have swelled their

gospels to an enormous bulk, fit only for the perusal of the studious, and those persons who had much vacant time; whereas the four Gospels, as they are written, make only a small volume, which is convenient for carriage, for reading, for the memory to retain; as well as adapted by the plainness of its style, to the meanest capacities; notwithstanding which, they contain all the important transactions of our Saviour's life, such as those which relate to his mediatorial office, the design of his incarnation, which was to teach us those things that belong to our eternal peace and happiness: to instruct us in his heavenly doctrines, as our prophet; to offer himself a sacrifice upon the cross, as our priest; and to burst the chains of death, and triumphantly ascend into heaven, as king, or head, of his church.

The omissions, therefore, can be of no real consequence, since, "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name."

During the obscure state of our blessed Redeemer at Nazareth, the Emperor Augustus died, in Campania, after a long reign of near forty years, to the general regret of the whole Roman empire. He was succeeded by Tiberius, his step-son, a prince of very different temper of mind from his predecessor. This emperor, in the second year of his reign, recalled Rufus from the government of Judea, and sent Valerius Gracchus to succeed him. After reigning eleven years, Gracchus was recalled and succeeded by Pontius Pilate, a person resembling in disposition his master Tiberius, who was malicious, cruel, and covetous.

Soon after Pontius Pilate was appointed to the government of Judea, John the Baptist began to open his commission for preparing our Saviour's way before him, according as was appointed, "The baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." Sacred history has not informed us of the manner in which the Baptist spent the former part of his life; but, according to ancient tradition, Elizabeth hearing of Herod's barbarous massacre of the infants of Bethlehem, fled into the wilderness to secure the infant John from the relentless cruelty of that inhuman monster, and there nurtured him with all the tenderness of an affectionate mother. John the Baptist was about eighteen months old when his mother fled with him into the wilderness, within forty days after which she died.

His aged father Zacharias, when he afterwards officiated in the temple, was slain by the command of Herod, for refusing to discover the place of his son's abode. The intended harbinger of the blessed Jesus being thus deprived of his earthly parents, the Father of the fatherless took compassion on him, and sent

an angel to defend and support him, till he had attained to a sufficient age and strength to provide for himself.

It appears, from the accounts of the Evangelists, that he dwelt in the desert till the time of his public ministry, resembling the ancient prophet Elijah, in the meanness of his clothing, and the plainness of his diet. His dress was composed of camel's hair, his food the spontaneous production of the wilderness, such as locusts and wild honey, and his drink the pure water of some crystal spring. His course of life was, indeed, admirably adapted to the doctrine of repentance, which he preached, as well as to engage the attention of his hearers; so that it appears highly reasonable, that those people who waited the coming of the Messiah with earnest expectation, should flock to him, anxious to hear what he had to deliver concerning him.

He proved very successful in his ministry, as he enforced the doctrine of repentance, because the kingdom of heaven was at hand; persons of all degrees and professions flocked to him, confessed their sins, were baptized in Jordan, and submitted to whatever the prophet prescribed as necessary to obtain an inheritance in that kingdom, the approach of which he came to declare. Amongst his converts were many of the pharisaical tribe, some of whom confessed their sins, and were likewise baptized in Jordan.

The conversion of the Pharisees surprised the Baptist, knowing that they maintained an high opinion of their own sanctity, for which reason it was very astonishing that they should express any desire of obtaining a remission of their sins. In short, he was much surprised to find the whole nation so affected by his threatenings, especially as he knew they expected salvation on account of their being of the seed of Abraham, a conceit which they greatly cherished, and which they seem to have derived from a misrepresentation of the following passage: "Thus saith the Lord, who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon, and the stars for a light by night; who divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; the Lord of Hosts is his name. If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me, for ever. Thus saith the Lord, if the heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off the seed of Israel, for all that they have done, saith the Lord."

But the Baptist, to curb their arrogance, called them the "offspring of vipers," instead of the children of Abraham; perhaps the Pharisees and Sadducees applied to John for baptism, thinking by that means to avoid the danger they might incur, from being the avowed enemies of the Messiah, whom they

expected to come in all the pomp of royalty, and to maintain his superiority by force of arms.

The Baptist, who was no stranger to those hypocritical sects, well knowing their application to him arose from sinister views, severely reprimanded them in general: "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance." O deceivers, hypocrites, whence have you obtained knowledge of the approaching event I am destined, by God, to make known? Whence have you a sense of the impending judgment of the Almighty? I have plainly told you the proper method of avoiding it is by a sincere repentance, which can only be evinced by the conformity of the heart and life to the word and will of God.—"And begin not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Deceive not yourselves with a vain presumption that eternal blessings are yours, merely on the score of your lineal descent from Abraham: such pretence will avail you nothing; for to partake of the promises made to that Father of the faithful alone, spiritually considered, you must show forth some resemblance of his faith and piety.

The Almighty Creator, who formed our first parent out of the dust, and caused Sarah to bear a son unto Abraham, when they were both well stricken in years, can by virtue of his omnipotence, raise up children unto that faithful patriarch, even from these very stones: children, indeed, who by the integrity of their hearts, and purity of their lives, shall prove their spiritual alliance to Abraham, and share with him the promised salvation.

The Baptist, by this plain but honest declaration, at once set at nought the towering expectations of this hypocritical tribe, by showing them that God respected the heart alone, and that all their pretences to descent, ceremonies, and other outward parade, was of no avail with him, who tried the heart, and searched the reins of the children of men.

He went farther, and assured them, that conviction and confession of sin were not sufficient; no, nor even a promise to forsake it, but that there must be a speedy and actual putting it into practice. "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Delay not this important work, for the judgments of the Almighty are at hand; therefore, if you continue in your sins, impending ruin will certainly fall upon you.

Nothing could be more sincere, nothing better calculated, than this doctrine of the forerunner of the blessed Jesus; it struck at the very root of the Jewish prejudices, which induced too many of them vainly to rely upon outward rites and ceremonies, prayers, fasting, &c.; which, if not performed with a

proper spirit, and from proper views, were an abomination to an holy God. Nor did his conduct less reprove the pride and hypocrisy of the scribes and pharisees, than his doctrine; for whereas those upstart people used to shun the converse of the publicans, and meaner sort, and would rarely deign to give them instruction, the humble Baptist received their applications in the most submissive manner, and preached to them the absolute necessity of faith, repentance, and obedience.

Indeed, throughout the whole of his ministration, he happily adapted his discourses to the circumstances and capacities of the various people he addressed; and took every pious means to prepare them for the reception of the promised Messiah, who was shortly to appear amongst them in the glorious character of Saviour and Redeemer of Israel.

Thus, by a life of inflexible virtue, discourses nervous and pathetic, exhortations sincere and fervent, and rebukes honest and courageous, the Baptist became renowned throughout the region of Judea.

Such was the admiration of the people at his life and doctrine, that from the vision of his father Zacharias in the temple, the arrival of the Magi at Jerusalem, the prophecies of Simeon, circumstances recent in their memories, they began to conjecture that John might be the promised Messiah, and were even ready to pronounce him the Redeemer of Israel. So that had he aspired to worldly dignity, he might, for a time, have shone in all the grandeur of human pomp, and claimed a regard superior to any of the sons of men. But, pious in principle, and humble in heart, he could not arrogate honors of which he was conscious of his unworthiness; and therefore honestly undeceived his numerous followers, by assuring them, that so far from being the glorious person promised, he was only his forerunner, and that such was his own inferiority, that he was unworthy of doing his most menial offices. "I indeed baptize you with water: but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose." *Luke* iii. 16.

During the time of the Baptist's continuance at Bethabara, the blessed Jesus left his retirement at Nazareth, and, previous to his public ministry, repaired to the banks of the river Jordan, where John was executing his commission from above, in order to be there baptized by him. We cannot impute this conduct of our Lord, to any necessity there was for his conforming to the institution of baptism, for purity needs not cleansing; it is therefore evident, that his motive was to add a sanction to that ordinance, for ever after appointed to be the initiating right of Christianity—"Go, baptize all nations," &c.

It appears that John immediately, as it were by a prophetic revelation, knew the Saviour of the world; for we find, from

the Evangelist, that he acknowledged his superiority, and declined the office; "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" Our Lord's answer, though short, is very full and expressive; "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." As if he had said, Regard not the precedence at this time, but perform thy office; for it is necessary that we should, in the minutest point, conform to the divine will, by which this institution is enjoined.

This remonstrance removed the objections of John, and he baptized the immaculate Jesus in the river Jordan, in the presence of numerous spectators.

When this ceremony was performed, as he needed not the instructions usually given on the occasion, he went up straightway out of the water, and kneeling on the bank of the river, fervently addressed his Almighty Father, for an abundant effusion of his Holy Spirit, as he was now entering on his public ministry, the prelude of his important mission, the end of which was the salvation of mankind.

His prayer was heard, his request was granted; and an immediate attestation of the divine pleasure given by a visible ray of glory around him, and an audible voice proceeded from the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, and pronouncing these words, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased:" distinguished his peculiar approbation of the blessed Jesus, by the epithet *beloved*, as well as his standing in that relation to him in a manner nearer than any of the human race, who are called in common, the sons of men. This voice resembled not any human sound; but was loud and awful, like the thunders of heaven, in order to strike with reverence the surrounding multitude, and publicly declare the holy mission of the promised Messiah.

The blessed Jesus was called, in the Old Testament, the Son of God, but was, on this occasion, declared by the Almighty himself, to be the long-expected deliverer of Israel. Thus, all who were present at this marvellous descent of the Holy Spirit, were amply convinced of the divine mission of our blessed Lord by an infallible testimony from above: this being "the star that was to come out of Jacob, and the sceptre that was to rise out of Israel; the *Shiloh* foretold by the patriarch Jacob; the *Great Prophet*, by Moses; the *Holy One*, by David; the *Prince of Peace*, by Isaiah; and the *Son of Man*."

But this remarkable event tended much more to the glory of the Messiah, than all those prophecies; as it was, in some measure, a real display of what they could only picture in the dark.

CHAPTER IV.

Commencement of our Saviour's ministry.—His temptation in the wilderness.—Deputation of the Sanhedrim to John the Baptist.—First miracle wrought by the blessed Jesus.

The great Redeemer having thus complied with the institution of Baptism, and received a most convincing testimony of his heavenly Father's approbation, by the miraculous descent and effusion of the Holy Ghost upon him while praying on the banks of Jordan, in the presence of a multitude of spectators, entered on his public ministry, at the age of thirty years, according to the custom of the priests among the Jews.

It was apprehended by the people, that, as he had just begun his public office, he would repair to Jerusalem, the seat of power and grandeur, in order to display to the mighty and the learned, his miraculous abilities, and effulgent glories.

But, averse to human parade, the heavenly-minded Jesus preferred solitude to the noise and hurry of mortal life: he therefore retired into the wilderness, in order to prepare himself, by fasting, meditation, and prayer, and sustaining temptation, for the important work on which he was entering—the salvation of mankind.

To promote this grand design, the Evangelists write, that this retirement into the wilderness was in consequence of the immediate direction of the Divine Spirit. Though solitude itself is melancholy, the blessed Jesus added to the dismal scene, by retiring to a barren spot, surrounded by high and craggy mountains, and forming a dark and gloomy chaos.

In this wild and dreary situation the great Redeemer, as Moses and Elijah had done before him, fasted forty days and forty nights, maintained an incessant communion with his heavenly Father, digested the doctrine he was about to deliver, and the obedience he came to perform; and by a total abstinence from food for forty days and forty nights, evinced the divinity of his mission, or, in other words, proved that he was "a teacher from God." But the melancholy solitude of a desert, and the extremes of hunger and thirst, were but a small part of our Saviour's sufferings in the wilderness: Satan, that implacable foe to mankind, was permitted to buffet him with the most insinuating wiles, and assail him with the most alluring temptations, in order to attempt the defeat of heaven's most gracious designs, and keep mankind under the dreadful dominion of sin and death.

The enemies of revelation have not failed to represent this event in a most ludicrous manner; if any, therefore, should demand why God permitted his only Son, the Saviour of the world, to be tempted by the devil, whose power was deemed to be restrained, we reply as follows:—One cause of the Redeemer's being suffered to be tempted was, that he, being personally acquainted with the wiles of Satan, might become a faithful and compassionate high priest, know how to succor his people in time of adversity, and pity them when they fell into temptations.

That in order to be a shining pattern of every virtue, and also a wise and valiant general, the blessed Redeemer underwent all the difficulties and trials attending his service, that we, being animated by his glorious example, might not sink under the pressure and troubles which God, for our good, should be pleased to lay upon us.

The Saviour of the world hath not only been exposed to poverty and ridicule, but also to the most trying temptations of Satan; that as the captain of our salvation has undergone the same, we ought not to faint when we are tempted, but, like him, be able to withstand the fiery darts of the devil.

It doubtless appears highly proper, in order that our blessed Lord and Master, might both enter upon, and prosecute his ministry, with more glory to himself, and advantage to mankind, that he should previously overcome the most subtle arts of that deceiver, who, under the mask of the serpent, seduced our first parents, and involved them and their posterity in one common ruin.

The peculiar devices used by the old serpent to tempt the Son of God, during the time of his fasting, are not recorded in holy writ, and consequently cannot be ascertained.

But at the expiration of the forty days, when the blessed Jesus had endured the keenest hunger, the tempter, to make proof of the divinity of his mission, insolently demanded, why he bore the sensations of hunger, since, if he was the Son of God, he must have power to change even the stones of that dreary wilderness into bread; and by so marvellous a transmutation, he might have the satisfaction of knowing the truth of what was said concerning him at his baptism.

But our blessed Saviour repelled this device, by citing the words of Moses, which implied, that God, whenever it seemed good in his sight, could, by extraordinary means, provide for the support of the human race. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." *Luke* iv. 4.

Satan, being defeated in this effort, took him to the top of a very high mountain, and thinking to work upon him by another artifice, showed him a bright view of all the kingdoms of the world, with their alluring glories, promising him universal

empire over the whole, if he would bow down and yield to him the honor of the benefaction.

But observe his accursed pride and arrogance, in promising that which is the gift of God alone, universal empire over the earth; and requiring what was due to none but the Supreme, religious homage. This blasphemy, as well as insolence, incited the blessed Jesus to exert his divine authority, and command him, in a peremptory manner, to desist, citing this special injunction from sacred writ, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Thus repelled, he repeated the attempt, and having taken our Lord to Jerusalem, placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, and by a taunt of insolence, urged him to prove the truth of his mission, by casting himself down from thence, citing, as an encouragement for him to comply with his desire, a text from the Psalms—"If thou be the Son of God cast thyself down; for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." *Matt.* iv. 6. But our Saviour soon baffled his attempt, by another apt quotation from scripture—"Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." *Matt.* iv. 7. Thou shalt not provoke the Lord, either by disobeying his command, or by an impertinent curiosity to know more concerning his mind and will, than he is pleased to reveal.

Thus baffled in all his art and devices, by the wisdom and power of the Son of God, he departed from him, and an host of celestial spirits, despatched from the regions of bliss, came and ministered refreshment to our Saviour, after his victory over the great enemy and deceiver of mankind.

Hence, notwithstanding the ridicule of the infidel, Christians may derive great encouragement to fight manfully against the flesh, the world, and the devil, under the banner of the great Captain of their salvation, who is ever ready to supply them with spiritual armor to sustain the combat with that inveterate and subtle foe, whose devices he has experienced, being in every respect tempted like them.

During the time of our Saviour's retirement in the wilderness, his faithful harbinger, the Baptist, being assured, from the miraculous descent of the Holy Spirit, and other concurring testimonies, that Jesus was the promised and long-expected Messiah, continued publishing his mission to the multitude; so that the rulers in Jerusalem received information of the surprising events that had happened in Bethabara, beyond Jordan, before they saw the blessed Jesus, in confirmation of whose mission and doctrine they were effected.

Prompted by curiosity, they despatched a deputation of Priests and Levites to the Baptist, to demand of him, who this

wondrous person was; whether he was the Messiah, or Elias, or that prophet who was to rise from the dead, and precede the Messiah, the powerful prince so earnestly expected by the whole nation of Israel.

The Baptist frankly replied, That he was not the Messiah whom they expected, nor Elias, who, as they vainly thought, would personally appear amongst them, nor any other prophet risen from the dead; but at the same time hinted to them, that though he was not Elias himself yet he was that person spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, and of whom he thus prophesied: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God." *Isaiah* xl. 3.

The Priests and Levites, not sufficiently gratified with this reply of the Baptist, demanded of him, why he assumed the power of baptizing the people, if he was neither the Messiah, nor Elias, nor any of the ancient prophets risen from the dead. To this demand John answered, I indeed baptize, to show the necessity of repentance, but my baptism is only that of water, and wholly ineffectual in itself to the remission of sins; but that washing, foretold by Zacharias, is of most sovereign effect: it is not my province, but solely that of the Messiah, who is actually upon earth, and among ye, though ye know him not, because he hath not manifested himself unto the world. The Messiah is so far exalted beyond me, in power and dignity, that I am not worthy to do him the meanest offices.

The day after the departure of the Priests and Levites from Bethabara, our blessed Lord left the wilderness, and repaired thither himself, while John was yet baptizing and preaching the doctrine of repentance.

The Baptist, as his grand business was to direct all persons to the Messiah, for life and salvation, in and through him, embraced this seasonable opportunity of pointing him out to the multitude,—"Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world!"

Lest the attending crowd should surmise, that it had been previously concerted between Jesus and John, that the former should assume, and the latter give him, the appellation of Messiah, he publicly and solemnly declared, that he was equally with them ignorant of the pretensions of Jesus to that high character, till he saw the miraculous descent of the Holy Ghost, and heard him pronounced, in the most awful manner, the Son of God. "And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven, like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptized with the

Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." *John* i. 32, 33, 34.

The Baptist having made this public declaration, the Messiah left Bethabara, but returned the day following, and John, happening to stand with two of his followers on the bank of the river Jordan, pointing to him as he passed, and in a pious rapture, repeated what he had addressed to the multitude the preceding day, "Behold the Lamb of God." It is hence imagined, that these two disciples, or followers of the Baptist, were absent at the time of the descent of the Holy Ghost, and for that reason this method was taken of pointing out to them the venerable person of the promised Redeemer of the world.

Animated with an ardent desire of hearing, as well as seeing this extraordinary person, they left John and followed Jesus, who, conscious of their design, turned about, and, with the utmost affability, gave them an invitation to the place of his residence. The Evangelist John informs us, that one of these disciples was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter; and it is conjectured, from his silence, that himself was the other; for it is remarkable, that in his writings he studiously concealed his own name. Be that as it will, it is abundantly evident, that the testimony of the Baptist, added to the tokens he had from the blessed Jesus, in the course of his converse with him, amply satisfied Andrew that he was indeed the promised Messiah, the Saviour and Redeemer of lost and perishing sinners.

Andrew soon after found his brother Peter, and brought him to our blessed Lord, who immediately called him by his name, telling him that he should afterwards be called Cephas, (which signifies a rock,) from his firm resolution of mind, and also because he should contribute towards the foundation of the Christian church.

Some time after, Jesus casually met with Philip, an inhabitant of the town Bethsaida, and said to him, "Follow me." Philip immediately obeyed the divine command, having heard of the character and mission of our blessed Saviour. It is supposed that this disciple was present at the miraculous descent of the Holy Spirit on our Lord at his baptism, which being admitted, his ready compliance with his call is no matter of admiration.

Philip meeting with Nathaniel, an inhabitant of Cana, a town in Galilee, informed him of the actual coming of the long-expected Messiah, the great deliverer of Israel, spoken of by Moses and the ancient prophets: "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathaniel was assured, from the predictions concerning the Messiah, that he was to be descended from the line of David, and born in the city of Bethlehem, and therefore discovered an amazement at his being called Jesus of Nazareth:

"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Can that most contemptible of places, Nazareth, be supposed to have given birth to the mighty Saviour, the Prince of Peace? especially as it was expressly foretold by the prophet, that he was to be born in Bethlehem, the city of David.

Notwithstanding the improbability of such an event, Nathaniel listened to Philip, and determined on an examination of the person who he said was the promised Messiah. Accordingly, under his direction, he repaired to the blessed Jesus, who well knowing his character, saluted him on his approach with this honorable appellation, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile."

Nathaniel, amazed at our Lord's pertinent address, as he had never before seen him, asked by what means he obtained such precise knowledge of him. Our Lord replied, "he had seen him under the fig-tree." Probably Nathaniel had been praying under the fig-tree, and been overheard by our Lord, who, from the substance of his prayer, thus concluded his character; for when the blessed Jesus informed him that he gave him that character on account of what had passed under the fig-tree, Nathaniel perceived that he knew not only what had passed at a distance, but had access to the inmost thoughts of the heart, a property not allotted to mortals; and therefore exclaimed with rapture, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the king of Israel."

Our Saviour then told him, he should hereafter have much stronger testimonials of the divinity of his mission, when he should be eye-witness to what the old patriarch Jacob had before seen in a vision; the angels of heaven descending and ascending, to attend the person and execute the commands of the Son of Man: an appellation our dear Lord assumed not only as considering his humanity, but in order to fulfil most peremptorily that remarkable prediction of the prophet Daniel concerning him.

"I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." *Dan.* vii. 13, 14.

The great Redeemer, having attested the divinity of his mission by many incontestible evidences, and made five disciples, departed for Galilee, where, soon after his arrival, he was invited, with his mother, and disciples, to a marriage feast at Cana, a place near Nazareth.

At these nuptials there happened to be a scarcity of wine, and his mother, who interested herself in the conduct of the feast, and was therefore desirous that every thing should be done with decorum, applied to her son, hoping he would be able to remedy the defect.

She had, doubtless, conceived he had the power of working miracles, and was therefore desirous that he would give proof of his ability in the presence of her friends, who were assembled at the marriage.

Addressing herself, therefore, to her son, she told him, "they have no wine." Our Lord gently reproved her, in these words, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour has not yet come;" that is, the time or period of my public ministry is not yet arrived; nor is it time for me to display my supernatural powers.

Notwithstanding this mild reproof, his mother still entertained an opinion that he would interest himself in behalf of her and the company, and therefore ordered the servants punctually to obey his commands.

Our blessed Lord being assured, that working a miracle would greatly tend to confirm the faith of his young disciples, exerted his divine power, by ordering the servants to fill six water-pots, containing each about twenty gallons, with water; which was no sooner done, than the whole was converted into excellent wine.

He then ordered them to draw, and bear to the governor of the feast, who being ignorant of the miracle that had been wrought, and astonished at the preference of this wine to that which had been served up at the beginning of the feast, addressed himself to the bridegroom, in the hearing of the whole company, telling him that, contrary to the usual custom, he had reserved the best wine to the last, at the same time commending so judicious a practice, as a plain proof of his approbation of his friends present at the entertainment. The bridegroom was equally surprised at the address of the governor of the feast, and the occasion of it, which was effected by the supernatural power of our blessed Lord.

This miracle, which was the first wrought by Jesus, confirmed the faith of his followers, and spread his renown throughout the adjacent country.—The votaries of infidelity have not failed to arraign the truth of this event, as well as to vent their sarcastic humor upon it. Their mirth and ridicule seem chiefly founded on a supposition, that most of the company were intoxicated, and consequently more liable to delusion; but we desire them to suspend their opinion, or at least their judgment a little, while we remind them, that the governor's speech to the bridegroom, "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and

when men have well drunk, then that which is worse," does not imply even such a supposition; but an evident reference to the manner in which the entertainment was conducted, a manner much preferable to that customarily followed.

Nor can these wise people in their own conceit, rationally think, that Jesus ordered, or expected, that all the wine he had furnished should be expended at this entertainment; for, according to the Jewish custom on these occasions, it continued a week. Permit us likewise to observe, that there might be a very important reason assigned for our Lord's furnishing such abundance; because, if the quantity had been considerably less, the miracle would have been much less apparent, and the enemies of Christianity, ever ready to grasp at the shadow or the pretence, might have denied that a miracle was wrought at all, it having been easy to convey away a small quantity of water, and substitute the like quantity of wine in its place; whereas such a deception must be allowed impracticable, in so large a quantity, the transmutation being momentary.

The deists have likewise made much parade of argument concerning the size of these water-pots. In this we give them their utmost scope, persuaded, that all which they can say on that head will not, in the least, tend to invalidate the Christian cause.

The blessed Jesus, having thus, by divers means, confirmed the faith of his disciples, and attested the truth and divinity of his mission, among those with whom he had been brought up, departed from Cana, and proceeded towards Jerusalem, in order to keep the approaching passover.

CHAPTER V.

Expulsion of the profaners of the Temple.—Jesus visits and disputes with Nicodemus.—Baptizes in Judea.—Instructs a poor Samaritan.—Heals a sick person at Capernaum.—Retires again to Nazareth, and is expelled thence by his impious countrymen.

Our blessed Lord, immediately on his arrival at Jerusalem, repaired to the temple, nor was a little shocked at beholding a place, dedicated to the solemn service of Almighty God, so prostituted to purposes of fraud and avarice, and become the resort of traders of every kind.

Such abuse could not long escape his notice or correction, having an absolute right to chastise so flagrant a perversion of a place, that strictly speaking, was his own. "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple: even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts."

Accordingly the blessed Jesus, whose pious soul was vexed at their profanation of the sacred place, drove out the traders, and overset the tables of the money-changers, saying unto them that sold doves, "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise."

These mercenary wretches appear to have been struck at once with a consciousness of their guilt, and the severity of our Lord's reproof, as they immediately departed, without making the least resistance. But our Lord's conduct in this affair, carrying with it every token of zeal, for which the ancient prophets were so remarkable, determined the council to assemble, and inquire by what authority he attempted such a reformation, requiring, at the same time, a demonstrative proof of the divinity of his commission.

To gratify their curiosity, our blessed Lord referred them only to the miracle of his own resurrection; "Destroy," says he, laying his hand on his breast, "this temple, and I will raise it up in three days." The rulers, mistaking his meaning, imagined that he referred to the superb and lofty temple finished by Herod, and therefore told him such a relation was highly improbable; nor had they the least reason to think he could possibly rebuild, in three days, that magnificent structure, which had been finished at immense expense, and was the labor of so many years.

Though the blessed Jesus declined compliance with the request of the mighty and noble amongst the inhabitants of Jerusalem, he wrought several miracles in the presence of the common people, in order to confirm the doctrines he delivered, and prove the divinity of his mission.

As there had not been any miracles wrought amongst them for a considerable time, though many were recorded in their sacred books, they beheld our blessed Lord with amazement and veneration; and numbers were satisfied that he was the long promised Messiah, "the desire of all nations," so often foretold by the ancient prophets. For wise reasons, however, he did not publicly discover that he was the Great Prophet, as he knew that the faith of numbers was yet but weak, and that, consequently, many would desert his cause, when they found he was opposed by the Sanhedrim, or great council of the nation, and did not set up a worldly kingdom, as they thought the expected Messiah was to do. But the miracles wrought by the Holy Je-

sus did not excite the wonder and astonishment of the common and illiterate class of the people alone.

Nicodemus, a principal person among them, impartially reflecting on his wondrous works, so astonishing in their nature, so demonstrative in their proof, so salutary in their effect, so happily adapted to the confirmation of his doctrines, and so perfectly agreeable to the attributes of the Deity as well as the predictions of the ancient prophets, concerning the Messiah, "the Sun of righteousness, who was to rise with healing in his wings," was perfectly assured that nothing less than Omnipotence itself could produce such wonders; and thence, like many others of his countrymen, concluded that Jesus was of a truth the Son, and *sent* of God, which last term is the meaning of the word *Messiah*. But scruples still arose in his mind when, on the other hand, he considered the obscurity of his birth, and the meanness of his appearance, so different from the exalted notions the people of the Jews always entertained concerning this powerful prince, who was to erect his throne in the mighty city of Jerusalem, and subject to his dominion all the states and kingdoms of the earth. To obviate, therefore, these scruples, and solve these perplexing doubts, Nicodemus resolved on an interview with the blessed Jesus; but choosing to conceal his visit from the other members of the Sanhedrim, who were greatly averse to his person and doctrine, he chose the night as most convenient for that purpose.

His salutation of the mighty Redeemer of Israel was this: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." *John* iii. 2.

Rabbi, I am sufficiently convinced that thou art immediately sent as a teacher from on high; for nothing less than power divine could enable thee to perform the miracles which thou hast wrought in the presence of multitudes. But this salutation by no means implies, that Nicodemus thought Jesus the great promised Messiah, even the Redeemer of Israel; nor could he obtain that knowledge, till it was revealed to him by the blessed Spirit of God.

We may observe, that our Saviour waiving all formality and circumlocution, which tend to no real profit, immediately preaches to this disguised Rabbi the first great doctrine of Christianity, regeneration; "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus, I declare unto thee, as a truth of the last importance; verily, verily, unless a man be regenerated in the spirit of his mind, have his will and affections transferred from earthly to spiritual objects, he cannot see the kingdom of God, which is holy and spiritual in its nature and enjoyments.

This was a mysterious system to the Rabbi, whose religious views extended no farther than to rites and ceremonies, and were bounded by time and space; besides he thought the very position of our Lord an absurdity in terms, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" Our Lord replies to this question, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The regeneration which I preach unto you is not of a natural, but of a spiritual nature: unless a man embraces the Christian religion and doctrines, whose initiating ordinance is baptism, and become a subject of divine grace, he cannot be the subject of that glory, which consists not in earthly splendor, and the gratification of the meaner passions, but in an exemption from whatever is earthly, sensual, and devilish, and the prosecution of whatever is heavenly, holy, and spiritual.—"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again;" wonder not at my doctrine of regeneration, which is designed to inform you, that you derive no excellence from your boasted descent from Abraham; as such you are merely earthly, subject to sins, and infirmities of every kind; as well as to show that you must undergo a spiritual mental regeneration, a renovation of the heart, which changes the whole man, and fits you for the participation of heavenly blessedness.

This important work is likewise spiritual in its operation, unseen by mortal eyes, being wrought on the mind or heart of man, by the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit, which changes his nature, and with respect to eternal things, makes him another, a new creature. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the spirit."

Notwithstanding this explanation of the blessed Jesus, Nicodemus was so prepossessed with partiality towards the Jews, who, on account of their alliance to Abraham, thought they were the people of God, entitled to heaven, and consequently in no need of this new operation of the mind, called regeneration, that he again demanded, "How can these things be?" The divine instructor then reproves his dulness and misapprehension of what he had so clearly explained and propounded to him, especially as he was himself a teacher of the people, and one of the great council of the nation. "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" The doctrines I deliver are not fiction, and mere surmise, but founded on eternal truth, immediately revealed from God, and consistent with the will of heaven. I am witness to the same, and therefore affirm that

such testimony is sufficient to render them valid. But your prejudices still prevail, nor can your unbelief be conquered by all the arguments I can advance. "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness."

If ye thus reject the first principles of the Christian religion, such as the necessity of regeneration, or the influence of the spirit of God upon the heart of man, how will ye believe the sublimer truths I shall hereafter deliver concerning the kingdom of God, or state of the saints in glory? If I inform you of spiritual transactions in this lower world, and ye believe not, how can ye believe if I tell you of those things which relate solely to another and heavenly state? But to confirm your belief in what I have delivered, know that my assured knowledge of these things is derived from the Father of Light, the God of Truth, by whom I am invested with gifts superior to any of the ancient prophets.

No man hath ascended the regions of immortality, and descended from thence, but "the Son of Man," consequently, no man but "the Son of Man," can, with truth and certainty, reveal the immediate will of the Father, who is in heaven. Your great lawgiver Moses, ascended not there, Mount Sinai was the summit of his elevation; whereas the Son of Man, who was in heaven, and came down from thence, with a divine commission to sinful mortals, had the most clear and convincing proofs of the will of his Almighty Father, penetrated into the designs of infinite wisdom and grace, and consequently must be higher than any prophet, being in a peculiar sense, the prophet of the most high God, or Angel of the presence.

This divine preacher, who spake as no man ever spake, likewise labors to eradicate the favorite principle of the Jews: I mean, that of confining all blessings, temporal and eternal, to their own nation and people, as well as to show the vanity of their expecting the appearance of the Messiah, in pomp and magnificence.

To effect this glorious design, he lays open to the Rabbi, that it was agreeable both to the doctrines of Moses, as well as the will of God, that the Redeemer, in this state of mortality, should be exposed to poverty and distress of every kind: that his conquests were not to be of a temporal nature, over the hearts and wills of mankind: that his throne was not to be established in the earthly, but heavenly Jerusalem; previous to which he was to shed his blood, as, by virtue of the same, all of every nation and kingdom throughout the earth might pass into the heavenly world, and there, for ever, provided they relied on his merits, and conformed their lives to the doctrines he preached, enjoy that summit of bliss, which, through his suf-

ferings, was provided for them, by God himself, to all eternity.

This is the sum and substance of Christianity; this is the sum and substance of what our blessed Lord preached to Nicodemus, that great ruler and teacher of the Jews; a sermon comprehending the whole of what need be taught, notwithstanding religion is at this day rent to pieces by sectaries; each of whom invent some new-fangled doctrine, suggested by ignorance, presumption, or both united.

That God Almighty, the Father, out of his unsupplicated, unmerited grace and mercy to the sinful race of men, sent his only begotten Son to purchase eternal life, through the effusion of his own blood, for all of every nation and kingdom throughout the earth, who should believe in him: that is, who should believe in the divinity of his mission, the efficacy of his atonement, and, in consequence of that faith, conform, as far as the infirmities of sinful nature will permit, to the rules of his Gospel. "Only let your conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ:" condemnation justly passed on all transgressors of the law of God, (which are all mankind) can alone be averted according to the divine institution, the propriety of which it is the height of impiety and presumption to call in question; by faith in the blessed Jesus, such a faith as we have just explained. "He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

It appears, from the future conduct of Nicodemus, that instead of supposing Jesus to be only "a teacher come from God," he was fully convinced that he was the "Messiah, the Redeemer of Israel:" for he afterwards constantly espoused his cause in the great council of the nation; and when his countrymen put him to an ignominious death, he, together with Joseph of Arimathea, conveyed him to burial, when all others had forsaken him.

The time of the passover at Jerusalem being expired, Jesus, together with his disciples, withdrew into the remote parts of Judea, where he continued a considerable time preaching the kingdom of God, and baptizing the new converts.—John the Baptist being, also, at the same time baptizing in the river Enon, a dispute arose between his disciples and certain Jews, concerning the preference of the baptism of Jesus.

Being unable to decide the point, they referred it to the opinion of John; on which the pious Baptist immediately declared, that he was only the harbinger of the great Messiah, who baptized not only with water, but with the Holy Spirit; adding that his own ministry was on the decline, as the beauty of the morning star, the harbinger of the sun, decreases

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"Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst."—JOHN IV. 13, 14.

when that fountain of light but dawns in the chambers of the east.

The Baptist likewise mentioned to his disciples and hearers many circumstances tending to prove the divinity of the mission of the Holy Jesus, and the important design of his incarnation. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

The Baptist having publicly preached the great doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus, departed from the wilderness of Judea, where he had continued a considerable time, and went into Galilee, often repairing to the court of Herod, who esteemed, or affected to esteem, both his preaching and person. But John, being faithful in his ministry, could not fail to remonstrate on the injustice and impiety of a known practice of Herod, which was, his cohabiting with Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; and thereby incurring the displeasure of that ambitious woman, he was, at her instance, cast into prison, and there reserved for future destruction.

Whilst these things happened in Galilee, our blessed Lord continued preaching in the wilderness, whither great numbers resorted, attracted by curiosity, to see the miracles which fame reported he daily wrought. The success of his ministry, exciting the envy of the hypocritical tribe of Pharisees, our blessed Lord thought proper to retire into Galilee, in order to promote the design of his mission in those parts.

In the course of his journey, being weary with travelling in so warm a country, and excessively thirsty, he sat down in Samaria, by a celebrated well, given by the old patriarch Jacob to his son Joseph, while his disciples were gone to the city to procure provisions.

While the humble Jesus was sitting by a well-side, a woman, a native of the country, came with her pitcher to fetch water; and our Lord requested of her to give him to drink. The appearance of Jesus astonished the woman, because she knew him to be a Jew, and the Samaritans were held in the utmost contempt by those people, who, indeed, arrogated a preference to all nations upon earth. But though she knew him to be a Jew, she knew not that he was the Son of God, full of grace and truth, divested of human prejudices, and the very essence of humility, and every virtue.

As the design of his mission and incarnation was to promote the real happiness of mankind, he embraced every opportunity of enforcing his salutary doctrines, and therefore, though his thirst was extreme, he delayed its gratification, in order to inform this woman, though of an infamous character, of the means by which she might obtain living water, or, in other words, eter-

nal life. As the best method to effect this purpose, he gave her to understand, that had she known the character of the supplicant, she would have eagerly satisfied his desire, and been requited by a gift the most invaluable, even "living water," issuing from the well of eternal salvation.

The woman, taking his words in the common acceptation, imagined that he suggested his power of supplying her with water flowing from a perpetual spring, which, in that parched climate, appeared impossible, demanded of him if he was vested with a power superior to their father Jacob, who dug this well, drank out of it with his family, and left it for the benefit of posterity.

The Saviour and friend of mankind, still benign in his purpose towards this poor wretch, replied, "That all who drank of the water of Jacob's well would thirst again, being but a temporary allay of a desire incident to human nature: whereas those who drank of the water which he was ready to dispense, should never thirst; because that water flowed from the inexhaustible fountain of Divine Grace, and could not be drained but with immensity itself."

Though this great preacher of Israel, by a simple and natural allegory, displayed the power of divine grace, the woman, blind to the allusion, endeavored to turn his pious and benevolent discourse to ridicule, desiring the gift of that "living water," which would for ever prevent her from thirsting for the future.

To show her the malignity of her presumption, in turning into contempt the discourse of him, who had the words of eternal life, the blessed Jesus, by some pertinent questions and replies, evinced his knowledge of her infamous course of life, and by that means convinced her that he acted under an influence more than human. To evade, however, the present subject of discourse, which filled her with a degree of awe and fear, she proposed to his discussion a case long warmly contested between the Jews and Samaritans, "Whether Mount Gerizim, or the city of Jerusalem, was destined by God, as the place peculiarly set apart for religious worship?" Our blessed Lord replied to this evasive as well as insignificant question, "that it was not the place, but the manner in which adoration was offered to the Father of Spirits, that rendered such worship acceptable; observing, that "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." *John* iv. 24.

In consequence of this reply to her, which apparently referred to things spiritual and eternal, she informed the blessed Jesus of her expectation of the arrival of the promised Messiah, who should punctually inform them concerning these points, so long undecisively contested.

Our Lord, embracing the opportunity of preaching himself to this poor woman, as the Saviour of sinners, replied, without hesitation, "I that speak unto thee am he."

While Jesus continued talking with the woman, his disciples returned, and approached him at the very time when he told the woman that he was the Messiah. Though they were astonished at his condescension in conversing with an inhabitant of Samaria, and even of instructing her in the doctrines of religion, none presumed to ask him why he conversed with one who was an enemy to the Jews, and the worship in the temple at Jerusalem. But the woman hearing Jesus call himself the Messiah, left her pitcher, and ran into the city to publish the glad tidings, that the great Deliverer of mankind was then sitting by the well of Jacob; and had told her all the secret transactions of her life. This report astonished the Samaritans, and at the same time roused their curiosity to see a person foretold by Moses and the prophets, and of whose appearance there was then so universal an expectation.

The disciples, on their return, set before their master the provision they had purchased; but he, wholly absorbed in meditation, refused the refreshment so highly requisite, telling them he had "meat to eat they knew nothing of." This unexpected answer surprised his disciples, who, understanding his words in their natural sense, asked one another, whether any persons had, during their absence, supplied him with provisions? But Jesus soon explained the mystery, by telling them, that he did not mean natural but spiritual food; that, to execute the commission he had received from his Father, was far better to him than meat or drink; and the satisfaction he was going to receive from the conversion of the Samaritans, much greater than any sensual enjoyment.

Many of the Samaritans were now near Jesus, who, lifting up his eyes, and seeing the ways crowded with people coming to him from the city, stretched out his benevolent hand towards them, and addressed his disciples in the following manner: "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields: for they are white already to harvest." *John* iv. 35. Behold yonder multitudes, how they are thronging to hear the word, which has only a few minutes been sown in their hearts! It is not, therefore, always necessary to wait with patience for the effect; for it sometimes immediately follows the cause. To gather this spiritual harvest, and finish the work of him that sent me, is my proper food; adding, for the encouragement of his disciples, As you have labored with me in this harvest of souls, so shall you participate in the great recompense of eternal reward: "he that reapeth receiveth wages, and

gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that both he that soweth, and he that reapeth, may rejoice together." *John* iv. 36.

Many of the people had been so affected at the words of the woman, that they were fully persuaded Jesus could be no other than the great Messiah; accordingly their first request was, that he would deign to take up his residence in their city. The compassionate Redeemer of the human race so far complied, as to stay with them two days; an interval which he spent in preaching to them the kingdom of God; so that the greatest part of the city embraced the doctrine of the gospel, and at his departure, said unto the woman, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." *John* iv. 42.

Having accomplished his gracious design in Samaria, Jesus continued his journey to Galilee, to exercise his ministry, and preach there the kingdom of God: telling his disciples, that the time was now accomplished which had been pre-determined by Omnipotence, for erecting the happy kingdom of the Prince of Peace; and, therefore, the Mosaic ceremonies were no longer obligatory, righteousness alone being now required from the children of men.

Our Lord had performed several miracles at Jerusalem during the passover, at which the inhabitants of Galilee were present. His preaching was, therefore, at first attended with great success, for they listened attentively to his doctrine, and received it with particular kindness and courtesy; especially the people of Cana, where he had turned the water into wine.

During his residence in that city, a nobleman of Capernaum came to him, requesting, with great humility and reverence, that he would come down and heal his son, who was at the point of death. Our blessed Saviour readily complied with the latter part of this request; but to remove a prejudice they had conceived, that it was necessary to be personally present, in order to restore the sick person to health, refused to go down to Capernaum, dismissing the father with this assurance, that his son was restored to health. "Go thy way; thy son liveth." *John* iv. 50. The nobleman obeyed the word of Jesus, and immediately departed for his own house; but before his arrival, he was met by his servants, with the joyful news that his son was recovered. On this the father inquired at what time they perceived an alteration for the better; and from their answer was satisfied, that immediately after the words were spoken by the blessed Jesus, the "fever left him," and he was recovered in a miraculous manner. This amazing instance of his power and goodness abundantly convinced the nobleman and his fam-

ily that Jesus was the true Messiah, the great prophet so long promised to the world.

After some stay in the city and neighborhood of Cana, Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had spent the greatest part of his youth, and, as his constant custom was, went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, and read that celebrated prediction of the Messiah in the prophet Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." *Luke* iv. 18, 19.

It should be remembered, that our blessed Saviour read this passage in the original Hebrew, which was then a dead language: and, as he had never been taught letters, could do it only by inspiration from above. But he did more; he explained the passage with such strength of reason, and beauty of expression, that the inhabitants of Nazareth, who well knew he had never been initiated into the rudiments of learning, heard him with astonishment. But as he performed no miracle in their city, they were offended at him. Perhaps they thought the place of his residence should have been his peculiar care; and, as he could, with a single word, heal the sick at a distance, not a single person in Nazareth should have been afflicted with any kind of disease. That they really entertained sentiments of this kind seems plain from our Saviour's own words: "Ye will surely say to me, Physician, heal thyself: whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country:" evidently alluding to the great and benevolent miracle he had wrought on the nobleman's son.

But the holy Jesus, by enumerating the miracles Elijah had done in behalf of the widow of Sarepta, who was a heathen, and an inhabitant of an idolatrous city, in the time of famine, when many widows in Israel perished with hunger; and of Naaman, the Syrian, who was cured of his leprosy by the prophet Elisha, when numbers of Jews, afflicted with the same loathsome disease, were suffered to continue in their uncleanness, sufficiently proved that the prophets had, on some extraordinary occasions, wrought miracles in favor of those whom the Israelites from a fond conceit of their being the peculiar favorites of heaven, judged unworthy of such marks of particular favor. The council were so incensed at this reply, that, forgetting the sanctity of the sabbath, they hurried him through the street, "to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built," intending to cast him headlong down the precipice; but the Son of God defeated their cruel intentions, by rendering himself invisible, and withdrawing from the fury of these wretched people

CHAPTER VI.

Our Lord proceeds to Capernaum.—Adds to the number of his followers.—Proclaims the Gospel in Galilee.—Preaches to a numerous audience his well known and excellent Discourse upon the Mount.

The holy Jesus, aggrieved by the cruel Nazarenes, departed from them, and fixed his habitation in Capernaum; the capital of Galilee, and from being built on the borders of the Lake of Genesareth, a place highly convenient for his designs; for, besides the numerous inhabitants of that city, the trading towns on the Lake were crowded with strangers, who, after hearing the doctrine of the Gospel preached by the great Redeemer of mankind, would not fail to spread, in their respective countries, the happy tidings of salvation.

Though it was expedient that he should spend a considerable time in preaching, and working miracles, to confirm his mission, and instruct his disciples in the doctrine they were afterwards to publish to the whole world, this could not be done at Jerusalem, the residence of the Scribes and Pharisees, whose ambition would never have suffered so celebrated a teacher as Jesus to reside among them: these countries were, therefore, the only places where he could, for any time, take up his residence, and instruct the people in such a manner, as to answer the great intention of his coming into the world.

If any should inquire why he chose Capernaum in preference to all the other places situated on the Lake of Genesareth, we reply, because he was certain of being favorably received by the inhabitants of that city. He had gained the friendship of the principal family, by restoring to health a favorite child, who, to all human appearance, was just sinking into the chambers of the grave. Nor was this family the only friends he had in that city; so stupendous a miracle could not fail of procuring the love and esteem of all the relations of that noble family; besides, so benevolent and surprising a miracle must have conciliated the respect of all the inhabitants of Capernaum, who could not be ignorant of so remarkable an event. And accordingly our Saviour spent here, and in other places bordering on the Lake, a great part of the time of his public life; so that the inhabitants of these parts enjoyed a considerable share of the blessed company and divine instructions of the Son of God.

It may not be amiss, in this place, to give a short description of the celebrated Lake, called in the Old Testament, the Sea of Chinnereth; but in the New, it has three different appella-

tions, being called the Sea of Galilee, from the province of Galilee in general; the Sea of Tiberias, from a city of that name on its western shore; and the Lake of Genesareth, from a particular tract of Galilee, extending a considerable way along its western side.

According to Josephus, it is a hundred furlongs in length, and forty in breadth. The bottom is of gravel, which renders the waters both of a good color and taste. It is softer than either fountain or river water; and, at the same time, so cold that it will not grow warm, though exposed to the rays of the sun in the very hottest season of the year. The river Jordan runs through the midst of it, which stocks it with a great variety of fish, of a peculiar form and flavor, not found in any other place.

The countries surrounding this lake were large, fertile, and populous, especially the two Galilees, which, according to Josephus, had a great many towns, and a multitude of villages, the least of which contained fifteen hundred souls. On the east side were the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, Gadara, and Hippon; on the west, Capernaum, Tiberias, and Tarrichea. And from all these advantages, it was a common saying among the Jews, that God loved the sea of Galilee above all other seas. An observation strictly just, if to these we add its greatest advantage, namely, that this sea, above all others, was frequently honored with the divine presence of the great Redeemer of mankind, while he dwelt at Capernaum, and even once after he arose from the dead.

While Jesus tarried at Capernaum, he usually taught in the synagogues on the sabbath-day, preaching with such energy of power, as greatly astonished the whole congregation. He did not, however, constantly confine himself to that city; the adjacent country was often blessed with his presence, and cheered with the heavenly words of his mouth.

In one of the neighboring villages, he called Simon and Andrew, who were following their occupation of fishing on the lake, to accompany him. These disciples, who had before been acquainted with him, readily obeyed the heavenly mandate, and followed the Saviour of the world. Soon after, he saw James and John, who were also fishing on the lake, and called them also. Nor did they hesitate to follow the great Redeemer of mankind; and, from their ready compliance, there is reason to believe that they, as well as Simon and Andrew, were acquainted with Jesus at Jordan; unless we suppose, which is far from being improbable, that their readiness proceeded from the secret energy of his power upon their minds. But, however this be, the four disciples accompanied our blessed Saviour to Capernaum, and soon after to different parts of Galilee.

How long our Lord was on this journey cannot be determined: all the Evangelists have mentioned is, that he wrought a great number of miracles on diseased persons; and that the fame of these wonderful works drew people from Galilee, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond Jordan. Nor was the knowledge of these miracles concealed from the heathen, particularly the inhabitants of Syria; for they also brought their sick to Galilee to be healed by him. Consequently, the time our blessed Saviour spent in these tours must have been considerable, though the Evangelists have said very little concerning it.

But whatever time was spent in these benevolent actions, the prodigious multitudes which flocked to him from every quarter, moved his compassion towards those who were bewildered in the darkness of ignorance, and determined him to preach to them "the words of eternal life."

For this blessed purpose, he ascended a mountain in that neighborhood; and placing himself on an eminence, from whence he could be heard by the throngs of people attending him, he inculcated, in an amazingly pathetic manner, the most important points of religion. But, alas! they were coldly received, because many of them were directly opposite to the standing precepts delivered by the scribes and pharisees. Surely, these people, who had seen the blessed Jesus perform so many benevolent actions to the poor, the diseased, and the maimed, might have entertained a more favorable opinion of his doctrine, and known that so compasionate and powerful a person must have been actuated by the Spirit of God, and, consequently that the doctrine he taught was really divine.

He opened his excellent sermon with the doctrine of happiness, a subject which the teachers of wisdom have always considered as the principal object in morals, and employed their utmost abilities to convey a clear idea of it to their disciples, but differed very remarkably with regard to the particulars in which it consisted. The Jews were, in general, persuaded that the enjoyments of sense were the sovereign good. Riches, conquest, liberty, mirth, fame, revenge, and other things of the same kind, afforded them such pleasures, that they wished for no better in the Messiah's kingdom, which they all considered as a secular one; and that a "golden," instead of a "sceptre of righteousness," would have been the "sceptre of his kingdom." Nay, some of the disciples themselves retained, for a time, the like kind of notion, till they were convinced of their mistake by the conduct of their divine Master.

Our Lord and Master, therefore, to show his hearers in general, and his disciples in particular, the grossness of their error, declared, that the highest happiness of man consisted in the graces of the Spirit, because from the possession and exercise of

them, the purest pleasures result; pleasures which satisfy even the Almighty himself, and constitute his ineffable felicity. The rich, the great, the proud, said the great Redeemer of mankind in whom the wisdom of God was fully displayed, are not happy, as you imagine; they are always wishing for what they cannot obtain; and their disappointments are poisoned arrows, festering in their breasts. On the contrary, the poor in spirit are the truly happy, who discharge the duties of their station, whatever it be, with virtue and integrity, and bless the omnipotent hand who fashioned them in the womb, and guards them from all dangers in this humble vale of sorrow and distress: and though they are excluded from enjoying an earthly kingdom, yet they have a much better reserved for them eternal in the heavens. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven."

The jocose and flighty are not the happy race of mortals; but, on the contrary, the afflicted, provided they rightly improve their afflictions; that is, if they are excited by them to mourn for their sins, forsake their wicked courses, and seek a better life. For they shall here enjoy the consolation that their sins are forgiven; and, after passing through the valley of the shadow of death, the fruition of eternal joys. "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

The truth of this heavenly aphorism is very evident; for what hath so great a power to turn the feet of the sons of men into the path of virtue, as affliction? Has not affliction a natural tendency to give mankind a distaste to the pleasures of the world, and convince them they are nothing more than "vanity and vexation of spirit;" and consequently to demonstrate that they must seek for happiness in things more solid and permanent than any in this vale of tears? Affliction awakens the most serious thoughts in the mind; composes it into a grave and settled frame, very different from the levity inspired by prosperity: it gives a fellow-feeling for the sorrows of others; and makes it thoroughly sensible of the danger of departing from God, the source and centre of all its joys.

Nor are the passionate happy; but, on the contrary, the meek; those who have subdued their tempers can patiently bear provocation, and are strangers to that destructive passion, envy.—The meek shall inherit the choicest blessings of the present life; for, indeed, they principally flow from that benevolent and heavenly temper of mind. Meekness consists in the moderation of our passions, which renders a person lovely and venerable in the eyes of his fellow mortals; and thence he possesses their sincere esteem, while the passionate and envious man is considered as despicable, though adorned with the robe of honor, and digni-

fied with the most ample possessions. "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth."

Men, through vanity and blindness, consider those as happy who enjoy the pleasures of this life, by rioting in luxury and excess. But this is far from being the case; on the contrary, those are the truly happy who have the most vehement desire of treading the paths of virtue and religion. For they, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, shall obtain every thing they desire; shall be happy here in the practice of righteousness; and, after this transitory life is ended, shall be received into the blissful mansions of the heavenly Canaan. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

Forgiveness, not resentment for injuries done, is the spring of happiness; and those who are of a humane and beneficent disposition, rejoice when they can perform a benevolent action, especially to their fellow-mortals in distress. The merciful shall see themselves recompensed even in this life; for they shall find, after many days, the bread they have cast upon the waters of affliction, returning tenfold into their bosoms. And surely nothing can surpass the pleasure felt by a generous mind at having relieved a brother, when pressed beneath a load of misfortunes; the pleasure is godlike; it is divine. "Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy."

Sensuality, which is a subjection to the appetite, cannot be enjoyed by those who seek for true and enduring happiness: it is the state of those only who have mortified their carnal appetites, to enjoy an inward purity of mind. With what delight do we behold the glories of the sun, and contemplate the beautiful scenes of nature that surround us! But what proportion bears this to the ineffable delights that must fill the minds of those who behold the great Creator himself, who called the whole universe from nothing, and still supports it with the word of his power? "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

The tyrants and conquerors of the earth, who disturb the peace of mankind, are far from happy: it falls to the share of those who love their fellow-creatures, and do all in their power to promote peace and harmony among the children of men. For they imitate, as far as human nature will permit, the perfection of their Maker; and therefore will be acknowledged by him for his children, and participate of his happiness. "Blessed are the peace makers; for they shall be called the children of God."

Nor does happiness consist in liberty and ease, if those privileges are purchased at the expense of virtue. Those who have suffered the severest trial that human nature is capable of sustaining, from purity of heart, and for conscience' sake, shall

be honored with the highest rewards in the blissful mansions of eternity. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Contentment is not to be expected from the applause of the world; but will be the portion of those who are falsely reviled for their righteousness, and share in the affronts offered to God himself; for by these persecutions the prophets of all ages have been distinguished. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." *Matt.* v. 11, 12.

These are the declarations, with regard to happiness, made by the Son of God; and surely we may believe the words of him who came down from heaven; and who, in compassion to our infirmities, took upon himself our nature, and to redeem us from the power of sin and death offered himself a sacrifice on the cross, and thereby opened to us the gates of eternal life.

Having shown in what true happiness consisted, our Saviour addressed himself to his disciples, and explained their duty as the teachers appointed to conduct others in the paths that lead to eternal felicity: excited them to diligence in dispensing the salutary influences of their doctrine and example, that their hearers might honor and praise the great Creator of heaven and earth, who had been so kind to the children of men.

As his definition of happiness was very different from what the Jews were accustomed to hear from the scribes and pharisees, he thought proper to declare that he was not come to destroy the moral precepts contained in the law or the prophets, but to fulfil or confirm them.

Nothing is so steadfast as the eternal truths of morality; the heavens may pass away, and the whole frame of nature be dissolved, but the rules of righteousness shall remain immutable and immortal. And, therefore, he ordered his disciples, on the severest penalties, to enforce, both by preaching and example, the strict observation of all the moral precepts contained in the sacred writings; and that in a much greater latitude than they were taken by the teachers of Israel. And, in consideration of the frailties of human nature, taught them that excellent form of prayer, which has been used by Christians of all denominations to this very day.

"Our Father," &c.

If earthly parents are called fathers, the Almighty has the best title from every creature, and particularly from men, being the father of their spirits, the maker of their bodies, and the continual preserver of both. Nor is this all; he is "our father" in a still higher sense, as he regenerates us, and implants his

image upon our minds: so that, partaking of his nature, we become his children, and therefore, we can, with a holy boldness, call him by the title of that relation. In the former sense, God is the father of all his creatures, whether good or bad; but in the latter, he is the father only of the righteous. "Father" is the most magnificent title invented by philosophers or poets, in honor of their gods; it conveys the most lovely idea possible to be conceived by the human breast. As it is used by mankind in general, it marks the essential character of the true God, namely, that he is the first cause of all things, or the author of their being; and, at the same time, conveys a strong idea of the tender love he bears to his creatures, whom he nourishes with an affection, and protects with a watchfulness, infinitely superior to that of an earthly parent. The name of "father" also teaches us, that we owe our being to God, points out his goodness and mercy in upholding us, and expresses his power in giving us the things we ask. Nor is this all; we are likewise taught to give our Maker the title of "father," that our sense of the tender relation in which he stands to us may be confirmed; our faith in his power and goodness strengthened; our hopes of obtaining what we ask in prayer cherished; and our desire of obeying and imitating him quickened; for the light of nature teaches us, that it is disgraceful in children to degenerate from their parents, and that they cannot commit a greater crime than to disobey the commands of an indulgent father.

Lastly, we are commanded to call him "father" in the plural number, and that even in our secret addresses to the throne of grace, to put us in mind that we are all brethren, the children of one common parent; and that we ought to love one another with sincerity, as we pray not for ourselves only, but for all the human race.

"Which art in heaven." These words do not suppose the presence of God confined; he is present every where; is about our paths, and about our bed, and narrowly inspecteth every action of the sons of men. But they express his majesty and power, and distinguish him from those we call fathers upon earth, and from false gods, which are not in heaven, the happy mansions of bliss and felicity, where the Almighty, who is essentially present in every part of the universe, gives more especial manifestations of his presence to such of his creatures as he hath exalted to share with him in the eternal felicities of the heavenly Jerusalem.

"Hallowed be thy name." By the name of God, the Hebrews understood God himself, his attributes, and his works; and, therefore, the meaning of the petition is, May thy existence be universally believed, thy presence loved and imitated,

thy works admired, thy supremacy over all things acknowledged, thy providence reverenced and confided in! May all the sons of men think so highly of his divine majesty, of his attributes, of his works: and may we so express our veneration for God, that his glory may be manifested in every corner of the world!

"Thy kingdom come." Let the kingdom of the Messiah, or the gospel dispensation, be extended to the utmost parts of the earth, that all the children of men "may become one fold, under one shepherd, Jesus Christ the righteous."

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." May thy will, O thou great Father of the universe, be done upon us, that by the light of thy glorious Gospel we may be enabled to imitate the angels of light, by giving as sincere, universal, and constant obedience to thy divine commands, as the imperfections of human nature will permit.

"Give us this day our daily bread." Give us, from time to time, such wholesome and proper food, that we may be enabled to worship thee with cheerfulness and vigor.

"And forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors." The Almighty, as supreme governor of the universe, has a right to support his government, by punishing those who transgress his laws. The suffering of punishment, therefore, is a debt which sinners owe to the divine justice: so that when we ask God in prayer to forgive our debts, we beg that he would be mercifully pleased to remit the punishment of all our sins, particularly the pains of hell; and that, laying aside his displeasure, he would previously receive us into favor and bless us with life eternal. In this petition, therefore, we confess our sins, and express the sense we have of their guilt; namely, that they deserve death; and sure nothing can be more proper than such a confession in our addresses to God; because humility, and a sense of our own unworthiness, when we ask favors of the Almighty, whether spiritual or temporal, have a tendency to augment the goodness of God in bestowing them upon us.

The terms of this petition are worthy our notice: "Forgive us only as we forgive." We must forgive others, if we hope ourselves to be forgiven; and are permitted to crave from God such forgiveness only as we grant to others; so that if we do not forgive even our enemies, we seriously and solemnly implore the Almighty to condemn us to the punishments of eternal death. How remarkably careful, therefore, should men be to purge their hearts from all rancor and malice, before they enter into the temple of the Almighty, to offer up their prayers to the throne of grace!

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." That is, do not lead into such temptations as are too hard for

human nature; but deliver us, by some means, from the evil; either by removing the temptation, or increasing our strength to resist it. This petition teaches us to preserve a sense of our own inability to repel and overcome the solicitations of the world, and of the necessity there is of our receiving assistance from above, both to regulate our passions, and enable us to prosecute a religious life.

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, for ever and ever." Because the government of the universe is thine for ever, and thou alone possessest the power of creating and upholding all things; and because the glory of thine infinite perfections remain eternally with thee; therefore, all men ought to hallow thy name, submit themselves to thy government, and perform thy will; and in a humble sense of their dependence, seek from thee the supply of their wants, the pardon of their sins, and the kind protection of thy providence.

This is emphatically called the Lord's prayer, because delivered by the Son of God himself; and therefore, we should do well to understand it thoroughly, that when we enter the temple of the Lord, and address him in solemn prayer, we may have hopes that he will grant our petitions. And, above all, not to harbor in our breasts the least envy or malice against any who may have offended us; for it is only on a supposition that we have forgiven others, that we have the least reason to hope for obtaining forgiveness from the great Creator.

The divine preacher proceeded to consider the great duty of fasting, in which he directed them not to follow the hypocrites in disfiguring their faces, and in clothing themselves in the melancholy weeds of sorrow; but to be chiefly solicitous to appear before God as one that truly fasteth. Then will the Almighty, who constantly surrounds us, and is acquainted with even the most secret thoughts of our hearts, openly bestow upon us the rewards of a true penitent, whose mortification, contrition, and humility, he can discern, without the external appearances of sorrow and repentance. It must, however, be remembered, that our blessed Saviour is here speaking of private fasting, and to this alone his directions are to be applied; for when we are called upon to mourn over public sins or calamities, it ought to be performed in the most public manner.

Heavenly-mindedness was the next virtue inculcated by the blessed Jesus: and this he recommended with a peculiar earnestness, because the Jewish doctors were, in general, strangers to this virtue, in which he was desirous his followers should be clothed, as being the most excellent ornament for a teacher of righteousness.

This virtue is strenuously recommended by our blessed Saviour, by showing the deformity of its opposite, covetousness,

which has only perishable things for its object. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." *Matt.* vi. 19, 20, 21.

More solid happiness will accrue from depositing your treasures in the chambers of the courts of heaven, than in this earthly habitation of clay, where they are subject to a thousand disasters: and even, at best can remain only for a short series of years; whereas, those laid up in the heavenly Jerusalem are permanent, subject to no accident, and will purchase "a crown of glory that fadeth not away, eternal in the heavens." Nor let any man be so foolish as to think he can place his heart on the happiness of a future life, when his treasures are deposited in this vale of misery; for wherever are laid up the goods which his soul desireth, there his heart and affections will also remain. If, therefore, ye are desirous of sharing in the joys of eternity, ye must lay up your treasures in the "mansions of my Father's kingdom."

Lest they should imagine it was possible to be both heavenly-minded and covetous at the same time, he assured them that this was full as absurd as to imagine that a person could, at the same time, serve and divide his affections equally between two masters of opposite characters. "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." *Matt.* vi. 24.

To strengthen this doctrine, he added a few plain and evi dent instances of the power, perfection, and extent of God's providence, in which his tender care for the least and weakest of his creatures shines with a remarkable lustre, demonstrating the wise and paternal attention of the Deity to all the creatures of his hand. He desired them to observe the birds of the air, the lilies, and even the grass of the field; leading his most illiterate hearers to form a more elevated and extensive idea of the divine government than the philosophers had attained, who, though they allowed, in general, that the world was governed by God, had very confused notions of his providence with regard to every individual creature and action. He taught them that the Almighty Father of the whole was the guardian and protector of every being in the universe; that every action is subject to his will, and nothing left to the blind determination of chance.

And if we direct our lives according to the divine will, we have surely no reason to be anxious about the necessaries of life. "Behold," says the blessed Jesus, "the fowls of the air: for

they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" *Matt.* vi. 26. Are not the fowls of the air, who have no concern for future wants, fed and nourished by the beneficent hand of your heavenly Father? and can ye doubt that man, whom he hath made lord of the whole earth, shall be destitute of his tender care? "And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these." *Matt.* vi. 28, 29. Consider the lilies that so finely adorn the adjacent fields; how beautiful their form! how lively their colors! how fragrant their scent! the productions of art but faintly imitate them. Even Solomon himself, dressed in his splendid robes of royalty, was but meanly adorned in comparison of these. And surely, if Omnipotence thus beautifully clothes the various productions of the fields, whose duration is remarkably transient and uncertain, you have not the least reason to doubt that he will bless your honest endeavors, and send you proper clothing. Are ye not of infinitely more value than they?

Be ye anxiously solicitous to obtain the happiness of the life to come; and all the good things of this life, shall, in the course of divine Providence, be added unto you.

Our Lord then prohibited all rash and uncharitable censure, either with regard to the characters of others in general, or their actions in particular: lest, in doing so, both God and man resent the injury. If you judge charitably, says the meek and benevolent Redeemer of the human race, (making proper allowances for the frailties of human nature) and are ready to pity and pardon their faults, both your heavenly Father, and man, will deal with you after the same manner. But if you always put the harshest construction on every aetion, and are not touched with a feeling of your brother's infirmities, nor show any mercy in the opinions you form of his character and actions, no mercy will be showed you, either from Omnipotence, or the sons of men. God will inflict on you the punishments you deserve, and the world will be sure to retaliate the injury. "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." *Matt.* vii. 1, 2.

The blessed Jesus, in his pious discourse, told them to inculcate an entire reformation in themselves, a particular absolutely necessary in those whose office it is to reprove and reform their brethren. And surely, nothing can be more preposterous, than to condemn in others, what we practise ourselves; or to set up for reformers of the world, when we ourselves are contami-

nated with the most enormous vices. With what countenance can we undertake to rebuke others for small faults, when we are ourselves plunged in the most detestible pollutions? Well might the Redeemer of the world say, "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." *Matt.* vii. 5.

These are the important points of doctrine recommended by the infallible Preacher, as necessary to the teachers of the Gospel of peace; but it is not enough that they know and practise the several branches of their duty: to extend the happy doctrine among mankind, there must be also a readiness, and even a desire, in the people to receive them: for if these be wanting, all attempts to spread these heavenly truths will prove abortive: and therefore our blessed Saviour added: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." *Matt.* vii. 6. Do not reprove men of a snarling disposition, as the attempt, instead of having the happy effects intended, will but provoke them to pursue their wickedness with greater boldness than ever. You may warn others against their company and example, you may weep over them, and you may pray to your heavenly Father for them; but you cannot reprove them with safety, or any hopes of success.

Lest the disciples should think that these precepts were not to be attained by human nature, he directed them to apply to God for the assistance of his Spirit, together with all the other blessings necessary to their salvation: assuring them, that if they asked with earnestness and perseverance, the Father of mercies would not fail to answer their requests, and give them whatever they desired; adding the noblest precept of morality that was ever delivered by any teacher, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets." *Matt.* vii. 12. How clear a rule of duty is this, and how easy and applicable to practice! Look into your breast, and do as you would be done by, in the same condition.

Having enforced these heavenly precepts, he exhorted them to place an humble dependence on the Spirit, to strive to practise the precepts of religion, however difficult the task might appear. "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." *Matt.* vii. 13, 14. How strait indeed is the gate, how narrow the way, that leadeth to life! In the way, nothing is to be found that flatters the flesh, but many things that have

a tendency to mortify it; poverty, fasting, watching, injuries, chastity, sobriety. And with regard to the gate, it receives none that are puffed up with the glory of this life; none that are elated and blown up with pride; none that are distended with luxury: it does not admit those that are laden with the caskets of riches, or encumbered with the goods of this world. None can pass through it but those who are stripped of all worldly lusts, and who, having put off their bodies, are, if I may be allowed the expression, emancipated into spirits. There is, however, no reason for us to despair of entering through this heavenly portal: if we sincerely endeavor, the assistance of the Holy Spirit will make us "more than conquerors;" and we shall safely pass through the "strait gate," and pursue our journey with ease along the "narrow path," till we arrive at the blissful mansions of the heavenly Canaan.

But, lest evil-minded men, under the mask of piety and religion, should endeavor to draw them from the paths of righteousness, our blessed Saviour cautioned his disciples to beware of such persons, and carefully to make the strictest scrutiny into their lives and doctrines.

Our Lord closed his sermon with the parable of the houses built on different foundations; intimating, that the bare knowledge, or the simple hearing of the divinest lessons of morality ever delivered, nay, even the belief of these instructions, without the practice of them, is of no manner of importance.

Religion alone is the foundation which can so firmly establish us, that we cannot be shaken by all the tempests of afflictions, temptations, and persecutions of the present life. It is this foundation alone, which, like a flinty rock, or the basis of the mountains, can support us in the day of trial. This alone can enable us to frustrate the attempts of men and devils, and patiently endure all the troubles of mortality.

CHAPTER VII.

Our blessed Lord cures the Leprosy and Palsy.—Casts out a Devil.—Succors the Mother-in-law of Peter; and afterwards pursues his Journey through the country of Galilee.

The great preacher of Israel having finished his excellent discourse, came down from the mountain, surrounded by a multitude of people, who had listened with astonishment to the doctrines he delivered, which were soon confirmed by divers

miracles. A leper met him in his way to Capernaum, and being, doubtless, acquainted with the wondrous works he had already performed, threw himself, with great humility, before the Son of God, using this remarkable expression: "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."

The species of leprosy common among the Jews, and other eastern nations was equally nauseous and infectious; but this was so far from preventing the blessed Jesus from approaching so loathsome an object, that it increased his pity; he even touched him; but, instead of being polluted himself, the leper was instantly cleansed, and he departed, glorifying God.

The Evangelist adds, that Jesus forbade him to tell any person what had been done, but repair immediately to the priest, and offer the gift commanded by Moses.

Having performed the cure on the leper, our blessed Lord proceeded to Capernaum; but as he entered the city, he was met by a Roman centurion, who represented to him, in the most pathetic manner, the deplorable condition of his servant, who was grievously afflicted with a palsy. The compassionate Redeemer of the world listened attentively to his complaint, and immediately told him he would come and heal him. The centurion thought this too great a condescension to one who was not of the seed of Jacob, and therefore told him, that he did not mean he should give himself the trouble of going to his house, as this was an honor he had not the least reason to expect, he being assured that his word alone would be sufficient: diseases and devils being as much subject to his commands, as his soldiers were to him.

Our Lord was amazed at these words. Not that he was ignorant of the centurion's faith, or the bias on which it was built; he well knew the thoughts of his heart long before he uttered his request; but he was filled with admiration at the exalted idea the Roman officer had conceived of his power; and to make this faith the more conspicuous, he gave it the praise it so justly deserved. "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith; no, not in Israel." *Matt.* viii. 10.

This centurion, doubtless, relied upon the miracles Jesus had before wrought upon the nobleman's son; but the excellency and peculiarity of it consisted in applying the most grand ideas of the divine power of Jesus, who, according to outward appearance, was only one of the sons of men.

This exalted faith induced the blessed Jesus to declare the gracious intentions of his Almighty Father with regard to the Gentiles; namely, that he would as readily accept their faith as that of the Jews, and place them with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, while those who boasted of being the offspring of these great patriarchs, but fell far short

of the heathens in faith, should be excluded from the blissful seats of Paradise. "And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." *Matt.* viii. 11, 12.

Having thus addressed the multitude, the blessed Jesus turned himself to the centurion, and said, "Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." Though the idea thou hast conceived of my power is just, though remarkably great, as a reward for thy faith, I grant thee the petition thou hast asked of me. "And," the Evangelist adds, "his servant was healed in the self-same hour." *Matt.* viii. 13.

On the succeeding sabbath, our Saviour went into the Jewish synagogue, at Capernaum, and taught the people, delivering his instructions in so graceful and elegant a manner, that they were all astonished; and to increase their admiration, one of the congregation, possessed with an unclean spirit, cried out, in a terrible manner, "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee, who thou art, the Holy one of God." *Mark*, i. 24.

But the blessed Jesus, who wanted the testimony of no such confessors, commanded him to keep silence, and immediately come out of the man: which command the evil spirit instantly obeyed, to the great surprise and astonishment of all the spectators.

The enemies of the Gospel have always endeavored to depreciate our Saviour's miracles, pretending that no more is meant by a person possessed of the devil, than that he was afflicted with some loathsome disease; and that, because sepulchres were considered as polluted places, therefore, whenever any melancholy person frequented them, they were said to be possessed with unclean spirits. They add, that it will be difficult to assign a reason why demons were, at this time, more numerous in Judea than in any other country.

To the first of these objections, namely, that the demoniacs were in reality nothing more than persons afflicted with some loathsome disease, we reply, it is evidently false; the Evangelist having taken care to be very particular on this head. "They brought unto him (says he) all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them." *Matt.* iv. 24. "He gave to the apostles power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease."

Matt. x. 1. And, accordingly, "he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils." *Mark*, i. 34. It is therefore evident, that those said to be possessed with unclean spirits were different from those which had diseases. Let us therefore pass to the second objection, and see whether we cannot give a satisfactory reason why demons were at this time more numerous in Judea than in any other country.

That there were evil spirits of this kind is abundantly evident from the holy scriptures, the sacred penmen having taken care to acquaint us with their origin and fall, their names and numbers, their government and orders, their malicious designs and employments, with several other particulars. So that no one can doubt of the existence of demons, who believes these holy oracles to be the word of God. And it is equally evident, both from sacred and profane history, that before our Saviour's advent, great numbers of men were possessed with those evil spirits.

The truth is, these angels of darkness had, at this time, taken possession of so large a share of the world, that they began to rival the Almighty in his worship; and, therefore, one end of the incarnation of the Son of God was, "that he might destroy the works of the devil." And hence we may easily see the reason why Omnipotence suffered these apostate spirits to appear so frequently in Judea at the time of our Saviour's ministry, namely, that the Son of God might, in a more signal manner, triumph over all the powers of darkness, and convince mankind that he was truly the Saviour of the world.

But to return. The fame of this miracle was soon spread over the neighboring country. He had before healed the sick, and done many other wonderful things; but to command with authority the unclean spirits to quit their residence; and to see these enemies to mankind readily obey his voice, filled them with astonishment, and abundantly convinced them that he was filled with the Spirit of God.

It has been asked, why the devil, who, it is plain from the text, knew the Saviour to be the Son of God, should put it into the heart of Judas to betray him, since this was the proper method of accomplishing the redemption of mankind? But the answer to this is obvious and easy. The devil, doubtless, knew Jesus to be the Messiah; but he was ignorant of the mystery of man's redemption. And, therefore, though he was not ignorant of his divinity, yet he might be so far infatuated as to think that, by destroying his humanity, he should defeat the great design of Omnipotence. For however extensive we may suppose his intellectual faculties to be, yet the wonderful work of man's redemption, by the death of Christ, was a mystery

that no finite understanding could comprehend, till God himself was pleased to reveal it.

Having performed this astonishing miracle in the synagogue, our Lord retired to Peter's house, where he found his wife's mother sick of a fever; but, on taking her by the hand, she was immediately restored to her former health, and "arose from the bed, and ministered unto him."

The Evangelist, St. Luke, in his account of this miraculous cure, tells us, that "he rebuked the fever," (*Luke*, iv. 39) to intimate his authority over all diseases; being analogous to the figurative expressions in scripture, which not only represent all inanimate creatures as servants to the Almighty, but diseases, famine, pestilence, and the like, as executioners, waiting him to inflict punishment on rebellious sinners. "Before him went the pestilence, and burning diseases went forth at his feet."

The fame of these miracles was soon spread through the city; and as soon as the sabbath was over, which ended at the setting of the sun, the whole city was gathered together about Peter's house, and with them great numbers of sick persons and those possessed with devils. The sight of so many human objects in distress excited the pity of this heavenly physician; so that he immediately healed them all. And thus was the prophecy of Isaiah fulfilled: "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses."

But the vast concourse of people that now gathered round him in Capernaum began to be troublesome, and he retired into a desert, whither the multitude soon followed him, and entreated him never to depart from them. But as this request was inconsistent with the design of his mission, he, for the first time, refused their request, "and preached in the synagogues of Galilee." *Luke*, iv. 44.

CHAPTER VIII.

Jesus confirms his Mission by producing a miraculous Draught of Fishes;—curing the Leprosy a second time;—appeasing the boisterous Waves;—casting Devils out of divers Persons grievously possessed.

Our blessed Lord, having spread his doctrine throughout Galilee, returned to Capernaum, followed by such numbers of people that he found it necessary to step into Peter's ship:

from whence he taught the multitude, who stood on the shore listening, with great attention, to his doctrine.

Having concluded his discourse, he turned himself to Simon Peter, desiring him to launch out further from the shore, and let down his net. On which the disciple told him of the unsuccessful pains they had taken during the whole night; but added, that he would, in obedience to his command, make one trial more. Nor had he any cause to repent; for the net was no sooner in the lake, than they found it so full of large fishes, that it was in danger of breaking.

This success, after such ill fortune, astonished Peter, who, falling down at the feet of Jesus, cried out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." He was conscious of the many sins he had been guilty of, and therefore afraid of being in the company of so divine a person, lest some infirmity or offence might have exposed him to more than ordinary chastisement.

But the benevolent Redeemer of mankind removed his fears, by telling him, that from thenceforth the employments of him and his companions should be far more noble: they should "catch men;" that is, they should turn them from the crooked path of iniquity, to the straight road leading to the heavenly mansions.

This miracle was considered by the disciples as a plainer manifestation of his being the Son of God, than those they had seen him perform on the sick in the city and neighborhood of Capernaum. It was a received opinion among the Jews, that all good men, by prayers, and laying their hands on the sick, were able to cure certain diseases, and even to cast out devils; but that the creatures inhabiting the elements of air or water were subject only to the commands of Omnipotence himself: consequently, the power shown by our blessed Saviour, on this occasion, undeniably proved him to be divine. And, accordingly, this demonstration of his power rendered these disciples, for the future, absolutely devoted to his will; and in the greatness of their admiration they abandoned every thing, and followed the Saviour of the world.

The disciples being thus attached to their divine Master, followed him through the cities of Galilee, where, according to his usual custom, he preached the gospel of the kingdom of God, and confirmed the doctrines he delivered with astonishing miracles.

In one of the cities through which he passed, he found "a man full of leprosy, who seeing Jesus, fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." *Luke*, v. 12.

It was the custom in Judea for the priests to banish from society those persons who were afflicted with the contagious species of leprosy. The disease of this person, therefore, was of a less pestilent kind, as he was suffered to enjoy the conversation of men. His case, however, excited the pity of the compassionate Jesus, who immediately cleansed him, ordered him to repair to Jerusalem, and, after showing himself to the priest, offer the gifts commanded by Moses, giving him the same admonition he had done to others, namely, not to tell any man what he had done for him. But the blessing he had received was so great and unexpected, that, instead of concealing, he published every where the great things Jesus had done for him; which brought such crowds to the Son of God, that he was obliged to retire from Capernaum into the wilderness, to refresh his body with rest, and his spirit with prayer and meditation.

The generality of commentators suppose that this leper, and the other mentioned in the foregoing chapter, are one and the same person; but this is a mistake. The former was cured in the fields, the latter in the city. After cleansing the first, Jesus went to Capernaum, and healed the centurion's servant: but after curing the latter, he retired into the wilderness to shun the prodigious crowds, which soon gathered round him, from the leper's publishing every where the miracle Jesus had wrought for him.

If the curious should inquire why our blessed Saviour so often commanded the people to conceal his miracles? we answer then, his modesty and humility would not suffer that his works should have the least appearance of ostentation; nor the Jews to have the least pretence for accusing him of "seeking his own glory." Nor was it proper, at this time, to irritate too greatly the scribes and pharisees. He well knew that in a certain determinate space of time they would bring about what had been determined by Providence concerning him. In the mean time, "he was to work the works of him that sent him, while it is day," (*John*, ix. 4,) and to propagate his Gospel with the greater facility, both among the Jews and Gentiles; which could not have been so conveniently performed, if the greatness of his miracles had once provoked the malice and envy of his enemies, to exert their utmost power against him. He likewise knew the mad capricious humor of the multitude, and had reason to apprehend "that they would come and take him away by force, to make him king," (*John*, vi. 15,) if all his miracles had been blazed abroad, before he had sufficiently instructed them in the spiritual nature of his kingdom, and that his throne was not to be established in the earthly, but in the heavenly Jerusalem.

MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES.

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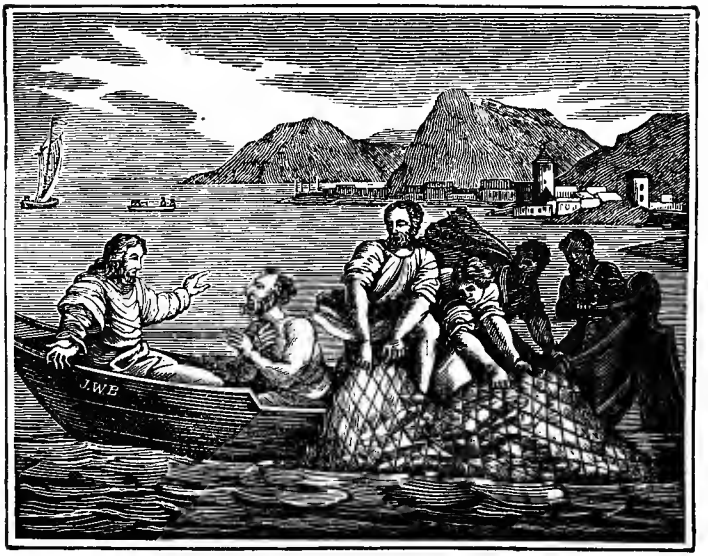

"When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken."—LUKE v. 8, 9.

From these instances we see that the blessed Jesus did not, without sufficient reason, desire his miracles to be concealed. The fame of this single miracle being spread through the neighboring countries, brought such multitudes of people to Capernaum, that, as we have already observed, he was obliged to retire into a solitary part of the neighboring wilderness. Nor could he long enjoy the repose of the tranquillity he sought, even in this thirsty waste; the people soon discovered the place of his retreat, and flocked to him from every quarter.

Our blessed Lord, finding all his endeavors to conceal himself in the desert would be in vain, ordered his disciples to accompany him to the other side of the lake; upon which a certain scribe, who happened to be present, declared he would follow him; but Jesus, who well knew that his desire was only to gain the profits and advantages of an earthly kingdom, which he supposed the Messiah would establish, told him, if he intended nothing more by following him, than to improve his worldly fortune, he would find himself wretchedly mistaken. "The foxes have holes," said the blessed Jesus, to this teacher of Israel, "and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." *Matt.* viii. 20.

The title, "Son of Man," is a name by which the Messiah is called in the prophecy concerning him, recorded by the prophet Daniel, (vii. 13,) where his universal dominion is described; and therefore, when applied to our great Redeemer, denotes his human nature, and, at the same time, conveys an idea of that glorious kingdom, over which he was in his nature to preside. But as it was also the name by which the old prophets were called, from the contempt in which they were held by their countrymen, it is used on several occasions to express the deep humiliation of the Son of God.

The disciples having prepared the ship, took on board their Master, and departed for the other side of the lake, attended by many boats full of people, who were desirous of hearing his heavenly discourses, and of being spectators of his astonishing works. But Jesus, being fatigued with the labors of the day, sat himself down at the stern of the ship, and fell asleep.

The weather, which had till now been calm and serene, suddenly changed. A terrible storm came on, and the rising waves dashed impetuously against the ship, threatening every moment to bury them all in the bowels of the deep. The darkness of the night increased the horrors of the tempest. Now they were carried on the top of the mountainous wave, and seemed to touch the skies; then plunged to the bottom of the deep, while the foaming billows roared horribly above them. In vain the disciples exerted their utmost strength; the storm continued to increase, and baffled all the efforts of human strength. The

waves broke over the ship, the waters rushed in, and she began to sink. All hopes of escaping were vanished; despair seized every individual; and they were on the brink of perishing, when they ran to Jesus, crying out, "Master, Master, we perish!" Their vehement cries roused him from his sleep. He raised his hand, so often employed in acts of mercy and benevolence; and with a stern and awful voice, rebuked the boisterous element. The raging sea instantly obeyed his command. The aerial torrent stopped short in its impetuous course, and became silent as the grave, while the mountainous waves sunk at once into their beds, and the surface of the deep became as smooth as polished marble.

The disciples had before seen their great Master perform many miracles; and therefore had abundant reason to rely wholly on his power and goodness. They should have considered that he who could, by his word, restore the sick, and bring the inhabitants of the sea to their nets, could with the same ease have supported them on the surface of the deep, had the ship sunk beneath them, and carried them safe to the place whither they were going. But they seemed to have forgotten the power of their Master; and when human assistance failed, to have abandoned all hopes of life. The blessed Jesus, therefore, very justly rebuked them. "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" Why should ye doubt of my power to protect you? The voyage was undertaken at my command; and therefore you should have been confident that I would not suffer you to perish in it.

It is indeed strange that the disciples should have been so remarkably terrified during the storm, and after it to make this remarkable reflection: "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" *Matt.* viii. 27.

But it should be remembered, that the terror of the storm had deprived them of all presence of mind; so that they did not recollect the divine power of their Master, during the fury of the tempest; and the transition from a terrible storm, to the most perfect calm, was so quick and astonishing, that they uttered this reflection before the confusion in their minds was over.

Soon after the storm was allayed, they arrived in the country of Gadara; and on their landing, two men possessed with devils came from the tombs, to meet Jesus. One of them, who was more furious than the other, had been often bound with chains and fetters, but to no purpose, being always broken with great fury; so that no man attempted farther to restrain him. Being therefore at liberty, he shunned the society of men, wandering day and night in desert places, among the sepulchres or caverns

where the dead were deposited, crying and making the most dismal complaints, and cutting himself with stones.

The disciples were terrified at the approach of these furious mortals; but Jesus soon dissipated their fears, commanding, while the men were at a distance, the devils to come out of them. The heavenly mandate was no sooner given, than they fell on their faces, crying out, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God?" (*Mark* v. 7.) "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" (*Matt.* viii. 29.) "I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not!" (*Mark* v. 7.) The apostate spirits well knew the power of the Son of God, and trembled lest he should immediately cast them into the torments prepared for them, and not suffer them to continue roving through the earth till the day of judgment, when they should be condemned to eternal punishments in the sight of the whole creation.

Jesus being willing that the torments suffered by these miserable men should be known, before he healed them, asked one of the devils his name, who answered, "Legion, for we are many," (*Mark* v. 9,) begging at the same time, that he would not command them to repair into the deep, or bottomless pit, but suffer them to enter a herd of swine, feeding at a distance.

How subtle are the wiles of the devil! The power of the Son of God he knew was not to be resisted; but he could not help envying the benevolent miracles he had wrought for the sons of men; and was therefore willing to prevent, as much as possible, their good effects on the miserable people of this country. This was the true reason why he begged leave to enter the herd of swine: he knew, if he could obtain that permission, he could destroy them; and this he hoped would render our blessed Saviour odious to the wicked inhabitants of Gadara.

Though Jesus well knew his crafty design, yet he permitted the devils to enter the swine, that his disciples and others who were with him, might be fully convinced these unhappy persons were really possessed by apostate spirits; and at the same time give them a terrible instance of their power, when free from all restraint.

The divine permission was no sooner granted, than the spectators beheld, at a distance, the torments these poor creatures suffered; with what amazing rapidity they ran to the confines of the lake, leaped from the precipices into the sea, "and perished in the waters." While the persons who, a moment before were raving and cutting themselves in the most shocking manner, became at once meek and composed, having recovered entirely the exercise of their reason.

The keepers of the herd, terrified at this astonishing miracle, ran into the city, publishing in every part, the cure of the men possessed with the devils, and the destruction of the swine.

This surprising report threw the inhabitants into the greatest consternation; they left the city to be spectators of so wonderful an event; but when they saw the men who had been possessed, sitting at the feet of Jesus decently clothed, and in their right minds, their fear was increased. For knowing they had trespassed in keeping the swine, which was contrary to the law of Moses, they dreaded a more severe punishment; and being ignorant of the goodness of Jesus, though he had given them so remarkable a proof of it, in the cure of these wretched mortals, they besought him that he would leave their country.

There prevailed a custom among the heathens, when any illustrious hero had delivered his country from his enemies, or from any other great evil, to erect lofty columns to his memory; his statue was seen in every place; altars blazed to its glory; they honored him with the high appellation of Saviour; and thought nothing, not even divine honors, too great to confer upon him. But when Christ had removed a monster from the Gadarenes, more formidable and fearful than any in heathen history, even a "legion of devils," and rendered the way, by which no man could pass before, secure from danger; instead of being received by them as a Saviour, and as a God, with the acclamations and hosannas of the people, he was besought to depart out of their coasts. Stupid people! they had, indeed, lost their herd of swine; but surely the valuable gift they had received, in two of their countrymen and fellow creatures being delivered from the tyranny of Satan, was better than the cattle on a thousand hills, and merited, at least, their thanks and acknowledgments!

The stupid request of the Gadarenes was, however, complied with by the blessed Jesus, who, entering the ship, returned to the country from whence he came, leaving them a valuable pledge of his love, and us a noble pattern of perseverance in well-doing, even when our kindnesses are condemned, or requited with injuries. He would not suffer the persons dispossessed to accompany him, though they earnestly requested it; but ordered them to stay in their own country, as a standing monument both of his power and goodness. "Go home to thy friends," said the compassionate Jesus to one of them, "and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." *Mark* v. 19.

We cannot but remark in this place, that we have here a fuller display of the tyranny and power of the devil, than in any other part of scripture; and, therefore, we may oppose it to the loose scoffs, and recommend it to the serious attention of

those infidels and thoughtless sinners, who like the pharisees and sadducees of old, when exhorted to abandon their evil courses, from a consideration of the power of Satan, and the dread of eternal torments, made a mock at both, esteeming them nothing more than religious fables, calculated to keep an ignorant world in awe. But with regard to themselves they vainly think their minds too well furnished with wisdom, and their discernment too penetrating, to believe any thing of the flames of the bottomless pit, and the malice of the prince who sways the sceptre of that horrid place; esteeming him a more mild and generous governor than he is represented in this miracle. But could they be persuaded to attend seriously to the miserable spectacle drawn by the Evangelist, of a wretched mortal, naked, dwelling in tombs, crying out day and night, cutting himself with stones, furious, fierce, destructive; surely their scoffs and idle mockeries would be changed into compassion, and a watchful care of themselves. This surely common prudence would dictate. But if they will deride, and still disbelieve, a short space of time, perhaps a single moment, will convince them of their fatal error; and dreadful experience force them to acknowledge the greatness of the tyranny, the bitterness and malice of this prince of darkness, against the souls of the sons of men.

May that blindness of mind, and obduracy of heart, be removed, that so they may know and acknowledge the salvation of God, even Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life!

CHAPTER IX.

Our Lord proceeds in acts of mercy and benevolence.—Adds Matthew to the number of his Disciples.—Casts out an evil Spirit.—Passes again through Galilee.—Selects twelve from among his Disciples, as his constant followers and companions, and harangues the multitude in an excellent discourse.

THE arrival of our Saviour and his disciples at Capernaum, a city of Galilee, was no sooner published, than such throngs of people were gathered together, that the house could not contain them, nor even the court before it. He however, preached the words of eternal life to the listening audience, among whom were many pharisees and doctors of the law, who, from the fame of his miracles, were come from all quarters to hear him.

He not only addressed them in the most nervous and pathetic manner, in order to inculcate the doctrines he delivered; but also performed such astonishing miracles as ought to have removed all their scruples with regard to the truth of his mission.

Among other instances he gave of his divine power, was that of restoring a man to perfect health, who had long been afflicted with the palsy, and was reduced by that terrible disease to the most melancholy condition, being unable to move any member of his body, but seemed rather an emaciated carcass than a man. This miserable object was supported in his bed by four persons, who being unable to enter by the door, on account of the multitude, carried him to the top of the house, which, like the other roofs in that country, was flat, and had a battlement round, according to the direction given by Moses. *Deut.* xvii. 8.

On these roofs there was a kind of trap-door, by which they came out of the houses upon the roofs, where they spent a considerable part of the day. It was also common to have a flight of stairs from the garden to the roof: and by these the persons seem to have carried the sick of the palsy; but finding the door fastened, forced it open, or uncovered the roof, and through the opening let down by ropes, the sick of the palsy, lying on his bed into the midst of the company, before Jesus, who seeing the faith of the friends of this afflicted person, he had compassion on him, and spake aloud, "Son, be of good cheer! thy sins are forgiven thee."

The pride of the scribes taking offence at this saying, cried out, this man speaketh blasphemy; for he appropriates that to himself which is solely the province of Omnipotence. "Who can forgive sins, but God only?" They were ignorant that the person who uttered such gracious words was the Son of God; and consequently, had the power of forgiving the sins of the human race.

But our Lord, who had recourse to the most secret recesses of the heart, and was willing to show them that he was really endued with the Spirit of God, said to them, "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, take up thy bed, and walk?" These were questions beyond the abilities of the haughty scribes to answer, and they held their peace. The blessed Jesus then added, that the miracle he was going to perform would sufficiently demonstrate that he had not usurped what did not in the strictest manner, belong to him. And turning himself from these bigoted teachers of Israel, towards the sick of the palsy, he said unto him,

" Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine own house." *Matt.* ix. 6.

Nor was this divine mandate any sooner given, than the man was restored to his former health and strength; and, to the astonishment of all present, rose, took up his bed, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw this great work, expressed the highest degree of surprise, mixed with admiration, for the great honor the Almighty had conferred on human nature. " They glorified God, who had given such power unto men."

But with regard to the scribes and pharisees, though they must have been confounded at this miracle, yet they still continued in their unbelief; an instance, which should awaken in us the most serious thoughts, as it abundantly demonstrates, that the palsy of the soul is a much more deplorable disease than the palsy of the body.

The blessed Jesus having wrought this miracle, repaired to the sea-side, and taught a multitude of people. What the subject of his sermon was, the Evangelists have not told us; but it was, doubtless, like the rest, calculated to promote the eternal welfare of mankind.

His discourse being ended, he returned to the city; and in his way saw Matthew, or Levi, the son of Alpheus, a rich publican, sitting in his office, where the customs were levied, at the port of Capernaum, whom he ordered to follow him. Matthew immediately obeyed the summons, and followed the Saviour of the world, to pursue a far more honorable and important employment, being afterwards both an apostle and Evangelist.

A few days after his calling, he made a splendid entertainment for his Master, inviting all the publicans he knew; hoping, that by hearing the heavenly conversation of Christ, they might also repent and embrace the doctrines of the Gospel.

The self-righteous scribes and pharisees, who considered all men as sinners except themselves, especially the publicans, were highly offended that one who called himself a prophet, should so far demean himself, as to be seen in the company of such men: and asked his disciples with an air of insolence, in the hearing of all the guests, how their Master could sit down at the same table with publicans and sinners?

Our Lord replied to this artful question, that the sick only had need of a physician, and desired them to reflect seriously on the prophet Hosea's declaration: " I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." The turning sinners into the paths of righteousness, which is the highest act of benevolence, is far more acceptable to the Almighty, than all the ceremonies of the law of Moses, so highly magnified by your fraternity; who, on many

occasions, observe them at the expense of charity; adding, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." The repentance of the righteous is not so much the object of my attention, as the conversion of sinners.

This answer, however satisfactory to an unprejudiced person, was far from being so to the scribes and pharisees, who, joining with some of John's disciples, then present, returned to Matthew's house, and demanded of Jesus why his disciples wholly neglected to fast, a duty often performed by the rulers of Israel, and the disciples of John? To this the blessed Jesus replied, it is not a proper season for the friends of the bridegroom to fast and afflict themselves, while they enjoy his company: "but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they shall fast." The various calamities and afflictions that shall attend them, after the departure of their Master, shall cause them to fast, which they shall repeat as often as the circumstances of distress and danger with which they are surrounded shall require. And added, that to have obliged his disciples to observe the precepts of frequent abstinence, at the time when he was employing them to preach the Gospel, by which all the legal ceremonies of the law were to be abolished, would have been as absurd, as to sew a piece of new cloth upon a rotten garment, which would only make the rent the worse: or to put new wine into old leathern bottles, which, on the first fermentation of the liquor, would burst. Indicating, that the old corrupt nature of man would not admit of a thorough reformation being made at once: that infant virtue must not immediately be put to the greatest trials, lest it be destroyed by the severity of the exercise.

During this controversy between our Lord and the haughty scribes and pharisees, in Matthew's house, Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came running to him in all the agonies of grief; and in the presence of the whole company, fell on the ground before him, beseeching that he would come and heal his daughter, who lay at the point of death.

When did the beneficent Jesus deny his gracious assistance to those who implored it of him? He immediately arose, and followed the ruler towards his house, surrounded by a great multitude of people, who were desirous of seeing so great a miracle.

But as he passed through the streets, a woman, who had for twelve years been afflicted with an issue, or flux of blood, and had spent her whole substance on physicians to no purpose, "came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: for she said within herself, if I may but touch his clothes I shall be well." Nor was she deceived; for no sooner had she touched the border of the garment of the Son of God, than "her issue

of blood dried up;" and she felt, by the return of her health and strength, and other agreeable sensations that accompany such sudden changes, from painful diseases to perfect health, that the cure was absolutely complete.

But this transaction could not be concealed; the blessed Jesus knew the whole, and her secret thoughts, before she put them in practice; and, pleased with the opinion this woman had entertained both of his power and goodness, would not, by any means, suffer it to pass unapplauded. Accordingly, he turned himself about, and asked, "Who touched me?" He well knew the person: but asked this question for the fuller manifestation of the woman's faith, and that he might have an opportunity of instructing and comforting her.

His disciples being ignorant of what had passed, were surprised at the question: "Thou seest," said they to their Master, "the multitude thronging and pressing thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?" They did not distinguish between the spiritual and corporeal touch, nor knew that such efficacious virtue had gone out of their Master. Jesus, however, persisted in knowing who it was that had done the thing; and the woman, finding it vain to conceal her action any longer, came to him trembling, and told him all. Perhaps the uncleanness of her distemper was the reason of her fear, thinking he would be offended even at her touching the hem of his garment. But the divine physician, far from being angry, spake to her in the kindest manner, and commended her faith, on which account he had consented to heal her plague: "Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole." *Matt.* ix. 22.

Such a miraculous incident must, doubtless, have greatly strengthened the ruler's faith; for behold, a virtue little inferior to that of raising the dead, issues from the border of Christ's garment, and heals a disease, which, for the space of twelve years, had baffled all the precepts of the healing art, and defied the power of medicine. Indeed, the faith of this ruler had great need of the strongest confirmations; for news was brought him, that his daughter was even now dead; and therefore it was needless for him to give any further trouble to Jesus, not in the least suspecting that he had power to recall the fleeting spirit, and to reanimate a breathless carcass.

This message was a terrible blow to the affectionate parent. His only daughter, who, a few days before, was in the bloom of youth, was now a pale and lifeless corpse; and with her all his joys and comforts were fled. But Jesus, commiserating his grief, desired him to be comforted, promising that his daughter should be made whole.

On his coming to the ruler's house, he found it full of mourners, who made terrible lamentations; a sufficient demon-

stration that the damsel was really dead. And, accordingly, when our blessed Saviour desired the mourners to cease their funeral ceremonies, as "the maid was not dead, but sleeping, they "laughed him to scorn."

It is necessary to remark, in this place, that the Jews, when they spoke of a person's death, styled it "sleep," to intimate their belief that his spirit existed in the happy scenes of paradise, and their hopes of a future resurrection to life eternal. But the blessed Jesus used the word with remarkable propriety, to signify, that though she was now locked in the cold embraces of death, yet he was going to release her from the power of the king of terrors, with the same ease as a person is awaked from sleep. Thus our blessed Saviour, in the very manner of performing a miracle, modestly declined the honor that would undoubtedly result from a work so greatly superior to all the powers of the sons of men.

Having thus briefly addressed the mourners, he entered the chamber where the damsel was lying, but suffered none to follow him, except Peter, James, and John; together with the father and mother of the damsel. Probably his reason for suffering these only to be spectators of so stupendous a work, was, that they might have an opportunity of examining the whole transaction in the most careful manner, and be thence enabled, afterwards, to report it upon the fullest conviction, and with every circumstance of credulity.

The blessed Jesus now approached the body, took her by the hand, and, with a gentle voice, said, "Maid, arise!" The heavenly command was instantly obeyed; the damsel arose, as from a sleep, and with all the appearance of health and vigor; for Jesus commanded to give her something to eat: a plain proof that she did not appear in the weak and languishing condition of a person worn out with disease, or even like one who had fainted away; a circumstance that abundantly proves the greatness and perfection of the miracle. It is, therefore, no wonder that her parents should be astonished at so stupendous a work, the fame of which was soon spread through all the neighboring country; though Jesus, who was in every sense above praise, and therefore never courted it, had strictly charged them that they should tell no man what was done.

These instances of power did the blessed Jesus display, to convince the world, that those who die in him are not dead; and that he hath the keys of life and death. Those also of the present age, who believe that the soul sleeps with the body till the resurrection, would do well to consider the expression of the Evangelist, "Her spirit came again," *Luke*, viii. 55; which sufficiently shows that the soul exists separately, when the body is laid in the chambers of the grave.

Having performed this benevolent miracle, our blessed Saviour left the ruler's house, and was followed through the streets by two blind men, imploring assistance; nor did they implore in vain. The Redeemer of mankind was, and still is, always ready to grant the petitions of those who apply to him for relief. Accordingly, he was no sooner entered into the house, to avoid the thronging of the multitude, than he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith, be it unto you," *Matt.* ix. 29; and immediately the valuable gift of sight was bestowed upon them.

The blind men were so overjoyed at beholding the light, that though our Saviour charged them to keep the miracle a secret, they published his fame in every part of the country, being unwilling to conceal what, in gratitude for so great a mercy, they thought themselves obliged to divulge.

The men, who had thus miraculously received their sight, being departed, the multitude brought to him a "dumb man possessed with a devil." So moving a sight could not fail of attracting a compassionate regard from the Saviour of the world, who, being never weary of well-doing, immediately cast out the apostate spirit; on which the dumb man recovered the use of his speech, and spoke in a very rational manner to the multitude, who, with one voice declared, that such wondrous works were never wrought by any of the old prophets. "It was never so seen in Israel." *Matt.* ix. 33.

These works did not remove the prejudices of the pharisees, who, being unable to deny the miracle, insinuated that he did it by a power received from Beelzebub, "the prince of the devils." A poor pretence indeed, which did not escape the animadversion it deserved from the Saviour of the world, as we shall see in a succeeding chapter. Well might the prophet Isaiah cry out, in a prophetic ecstasy, "Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

But all their calumnies could not provoke the meek and merciful Jesus to cease from performing these compassionate offices for the children of men. On the contrary, he exerted himself still more and more, to promote the prosperity and salvation of the whole human race. Accordingly, he left Capernaum, and travelled through the country, in search of miserable objects, on whom he might confer happiness and peace: visiting "all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness, and every disease among the people." *Matt.* ix. 35.

In his return from this tour to Capernaum, he was attended by a great number of people, who expressed a more than common desire to hear the doctrine of the Gospel. An incident

abundantly sufficient to engage the attention of this divine teacher, who was always careful to cultivate the latent seeds of virtue, and cherish the least appearance of piety and religion.

It was not this desire of the people alone that excited his compassion towards them; he well knew they were wholly destitute of spiritual teachers; for the scribes and pharisees, who ought to have instructed them, were blind, perverse, and lazy guides, who, instead of seeking the glory of the Almighty, made it their whole business to support and augment their own. They magnified the ritual ceremonies and traditions, but took no care to inspire the people with a love for virtue. "To do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God," were no parts of their doctrine. The small appearance of religion they entertained was wholly hypocritical; and the disputes carried on with so much bitterness, between the factions of Pharisees and Sadducees, distracted the minds of the people.

The inhabitants of Judea were truly in a deplorable situation, which called loudly for the compassion of the Son of God, who always regarded the descendants of Jacob with the most tender affection. He saw the sheep of Israel scattered on the barren wastes of error and superstition; without a shepherd to lead them to the heavenly pastures of the law and the prophets. He saw; he commiserated their distress; and resolved to provide some remedy for it. Accordingly he directed his apostles to intercede with the Almighty, who, by his servants, the prophets, had sown the seeds of piety and virtue in the minds of the Jews, that he would not suffer the rich harvest to be lost, for want of laborers. "The harvest," said the blessed Jesus to his disciples, "truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." *Matt.* ix. 37, 38.

To these gracious acts he added the most powerful of all intercessions to the throne of grace, his own prevailing prayer. And, accordingly, ascended to the top of the mountain, and there spent the night in making the most powerful petitions, in behalf of "the lost sheep of Israel," to his heavenly Father.

Having spent the night in this pious exercise, he lost no time in putting his beneficent intentions in execution; for no sooner had darkness withdrawn her sable veil, and the blushing rays of the morning adorned the chambers of the east, than this benevolent Redeemer of mankind called his disciples to him, and chose twelve, "whom he named apostles, to be with him: and that he might send them forth to preach." He ordered them to be with him, that they might learn from his own mouth the doctrines they were to preach to the whole world; that they might "see his glory," the transcendent glory of the virtues

which adorned his human life; and that they might be witnesses of all the wondrous works he should perform, during his residence in this vale of misery, and by which his mission from the courts of heaven was to be fully demonstrated.

These twelve persons, thus qualified, were to supply the people with that spiritual food they so greatly wanted, both while their master continued here below, and after his ascension to the right hand of Power.

Having ordained them to their respective offices, he sent them out by two and two, into the most distant parts of Judea, to preach there the glad tidings of the Gospel, and prepare the way for their Master, the great Shepherd of Israel.

And that nothing might be wanting to render their preaching acceptable to the people, and confirm the important doctrines they delivered, he invested them with full power to cure all diseases, cast out devils, and even to raise the dead.

Perhaps the number of the twelve apostles was fixed upon rather than any other, to show that God intended, by their ministry, to gather together the scattered remnant of the twelve tribes of Israel. But be that as it may, these twelve apostles constantly continued with him from the time of their election, till he offered himself a sacrifice on the cross, for the sins of mankind, never departing from him, unless by his own appointment.

All these persons being illiterate Galileans, and at first destitute of the qualifications necessary in the discharge of their duty, integrity alone excepted, were the most unlikely persons in the world to confound the wisdom of the wise, baffle the power of the mighty, overturn the many false religions which then flourished every where, under the protection of the civil government; and, in short, to reform the manners of mankind, then universally corrupted.

Had the choice of instruments for so grand an undertaking been committed to human prudence, such, doubtless, would have been chosen, as were remarkable for learning, strong reasoning, and prevailing eloquence. But behold the wisdom of God, infinitely superior to that of man, acted very differently; for the treasure of the Gospel was committed to earthen vessels, that the excellency of its power might in all countries appear to be of God.

Accordingly, the religion which these illiterate Galileans taught through the world, exhibited a far juster notion of things than the Grecian and Roman philosophers were able to attain, though their lives were spent in study and contemplation. Hence by its own intrinsic splendor, as well as by the external glory of the miracles that accompanied it, this religion sufficiently appeared to be wholly original and divine.

Besides, its truth and dignity were sufficiently attested, by the remarkable success that attended it. It was received every where by the bulk of mankind with the highest applause, as something they had hitherto been seeking in vain; while the maxims and precepts of the philosophers seldom spread farther than their respective schools.

It was, therefore, with the highest wisdom that the foundations of the church were laid in the labors of a few illiterate fishermen for it demonstrated, with irresistible evidence, that the immense fabric was at first raised, and is still sustained, not by the arm of flesh, but purely by the hand of the Almighty.

After appointing the twelve apostles, he came down from the mountain, and was joyfully received by the multitudes of people who were waiting for him in the plain and pressed to touch him; well knowing that if they could only touch the border of his garment, they should be healed of whatever distemper they were afflicted with. A sufficient reason why they were continually waiting for him, and were willing to accompany him, even into the remotest corners of the wilderness.

The preaching and miracles of our Lord were not attended to by the low and vulgar only; persons of the first rank and character came from distant parts of the country, to converse with him, hear his doctrine, and be spectators of his wonderful works. It therefore evidently appears, that persons of all ranks were desirous of following him; and their desire could be founded on nothing but the truth of his miracles.

After healing all the sick among the multitude, he turned towards his disciples, and delivered a divine discourse, something like that he had before preached to them on the mountain; but in the former, he only pronounced blessings, whereas, in the latter, he added curses also; and in this principally it differs from that recorded by St. Matthew: I shall therefore only select a few passages from the sermon now delivered, as I have given a larger paraphrase on the former.

"Wo unto you who are rich, for ye have received your consolation." *Luke*, vi. 24. Riches, considered in themselves, have no tendency to render us the objects of the Almighty's hatred, unless accompanied with those vices which too often flow from an opulent fortune; as luxury, covetousness, and the like. The wo, therefore, is here denounced against such only as are contaminated with these vices; for those who make a proper use of their wealth, and possess the virtues which should accompany influence, have no share in the malediction.

"Wo unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger." The pain ye shall suffer in a future life shall be sharp and excruciating. The opportunities you neglected of doing good to your

afflicted brethren in this life, shall then be remembered with the most poignant grief and bewailed with the most bitter lamentations.

"Wo unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep." This malediction of our blessed Saviour is not inconsistent with the apostle's precept, which commands Christians always to rejoice. Neither is the mirth against which the wo is here denounced, to be understood of that constant cheerfulness of temper which arises in the breast of true Christians, from the comfortable and cheerful doctrine with which they are enlightened by the Gospel, the assurance they have of reconciliation with God, the hope they have of everlasting life, and the pleasure they enjoy in the practice of virtue and the other duties of religion; but it relates to that turbulent, carnal mirth, that excessive levity and vanity of spirit, which arises not from any solid foundation, but from immoderate sensual pleasures, of those vain amusements of life in which the giddy and the gay contrive to spend their time; that sort of mirth which dissipates thought, leaves no time for consideration, and gives them an utter aversion to all serious reflection. Persons who constantly indulge themselves in this kind of mirth shall weep and mourn eternally, when they are excluded from the joys of heaven, and banished for ever from the presence of God, by the light of whose countenance all the righteous are enlivened, and made transcendantly happy.

"Wo unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets. Wo unto you, if by propagating such doctrines as encourage men in sin, you shall gain to yourselves the applause and flattery of the generality of men: for thus in old times did the false prophets and deceivers, who, accommodating their doctrines to the lusts and passions of men, gained the applause of men, but incurred the wrath and displeasure of a just and all-seeing God.

CHAPTER X.

Continuation of our Lord's glorious doctrines, beneficent acts, and astonishing miracles, wrought in confirmation of the Divinity of his Mission and the extending of his heavenly Kingdom.

THE divine preacher having closed this excellent sermon, repaired to Capernaum, and was met by certain messengers

from a centurion, desiring him to come and heal a servant, who was dear to him, and ready to die.

This centurion, from the account given of him by the Evangelist, seems to have been a proselyte to the Jewish religion, as he was a lover of the sons of Jacob, and had erected for them a place of worship; and accordingly, the inhabitants of Capernaum strongly espoused his cause on this occasion, saying, "that he was worthy for whom he should do this. For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue." *Luke*, vii. 4, 5.

There was not the least danger that this petition would be rejected by the blessed Jesus, who sought all occasions of doing good to the children of men. Accordingly, he very readily accompanied the messengers; but before he came to the house, he was met by some of the centurion's friends, who expressed the high idea that officer entertained of his power, and desired that he would not take the trouble of coming to his house, as a word was abundantly sufficient to perform the cure. At this message, Jesus turned himself about, and said to the multitude, "I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel." *Luke*, vii. 9.

The persons having delivered their message, returned to the house, and found the servant, who had been sick, perfectly recovered.

Many persons have thought that this miracle, and that mentioned in *Matt.* viii. are the same; but this is a mistake. The centurion, in the former, came in person, but in the latter, the petition was sent by the elders of Capernaum. There is not the least hint in the first miracle, that the centurion was a proselyte; but he in the second, is said to have been a lover of the Jewish nation, and to have built them a synagogue. Several other particulars, which prove these miracles to have been really different, will easily occur to the reader, and therefore I shall not here enumerate them; what has been said will, I presume, be sufficient to remove any objection that may be offered against my considering them as different transactions.

Having thus miraculously healed the centurion's servant, he repaired to Peter's house to eat bread; but the multitude came again together, and surrounded the house in a very tumultuous manner, demanding, in all probability, that he would heal their sick: and it was not without difficulty, they were dispersed by his friends.

The multitude being dispersed, Jesus called unto him the twelve apostles he had before chosen, and conferred on them the power of working miracles, in confirmation of the doctrines they were appointed to preach, and delivered them such instruc-

tions as he thought necessary, to enable them to discharge the duties of this important commission.

"Go," said their heavenly Master, "and preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Publish in every corner of Judea, the glad tidings of the Gospel, and the near approach of the great Messiah's kingdom: not a temporal, but a spiritual empire, consisting of righteousness and peace.

To inure them to those hardships and dangers which were to attend them in their preaching, after the death of their Master, our Lord forbade them to provide any thing for their journey; teaching them to rely wholly on the providence of God, for support in every distress, and to have recourse to his protection in every danger.

Our Lord's disciples had, perhaps, flattered themselves with the pleasing expectation, that the glad tidings they were going to publish, and the miraculous cures they were enabled to perform, would procure them an honorable reception wherever they came. Their Master, however, told them the event would not in any manner answer their expectations; but that they were every where to be despised, persecuted, delivered into the hands of the rulers, and punished as wicked men. But at the same time he promised them the aid of the Almighty, and gave them instructions for their behavior in every particular. He added, that those who rejected their message should be treated with severity by the great Judge of all the earth; but those who received them kindly, and gave even a cup of cold water to the least of his disciples, for their Master's sake, should not fail of receiving a large reward.

Having received this commission, the apostles visited all the parts of Palestine, where the Jews inhabited, preaching the Gospel and the doctrine of repentance, working miracles for its confirmation, and particularly, healed the sick, while our blessed Saviour continued the course of his ministry in Galilee.

The apostles being returned from their tour, Jesus went to Nain, a town situated near Endor, about two miles south of Mount Tabor, attended by many of his disciples, and a great multitude of people.

On their coming to the entrance of the city, a melancholy scene presented itself to the eyes of Jesus and his followers. "Behold there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." *Luke* vii. 12. Who would not have imagined, that God had indeed "forgotten to be gracious, and in his anger shut up his tender mercies" from this poor widow, suffering under the heaviest load, and laboring under the most oppressive burden of distress? Deprived of her son, her only son, in the flower of his youth; when he might have repaid his mother's toils, and been to her in the place of a

husband; of that husband she had long since lost, and whose loss was supportable only through the comfort of this child, the surviving image of his departed father, the balm of all her grief, the hope of her afflicted soul: who now shall administer consolation to this solitary widow, to this lonely parent, bereaved of her husband, deprived of her child? What misery can be more complicated? What can be more natural than that she should "refuse to be comforted," that she should "go down to the grave with mourning," and visit the chambers of death, the residence of the beloved remains of her husband and her son, with sorrow?

Towards the receptacle of mortality, that dreary waste of forgetfulness, the mournful funeral was now, with slow and solemn pomp advancing, when the compassionate Redeemer of mankind met the melancholy procession, composed of a long train of her weeping neighbors and relations, who pitied her distress, sympathized with her in this great affliction, and were melted with compassion at her deplorable circumstances: but sighs and tears were all they had to offer; relief could not be expected from a human being; their commiseration, though grateful to her oppressed soul, could neither restore the husband nor the son; submission and patience were the only lessons they could preach, or this afflicted daughter of Israel learn.

But though man was unable to relieve the distresses of this disconsolate widow, the Saviour of the world, who beheld the melancholy procession, was both able and willing to do it. There was no need of a powerful solicitor to implore assistance from the Son of God, his own compassion was abundantly sufficient. "When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her;" he both sought the patient, and offered the cure unexpectedly. "Weep not," said the blessed Jesus to this afflicted woman. Alas! it had been wholly in vain to forbid her refrain from tears, who had lost her only child, the sole comfort of her age, without administering the balm of comfort to heal her broken spirit. This our compassionate Redeemer well knew; and, therefore, immediately advancing towards the corpse, "he touched the bier:" the pomp of the funeral was instantly stopped, silence closed every mouth, and expectation filled the breast of every spectator. But this deep suspense did not long continue; that glorious voice, which shall one day call our dead bodies from the grave, filled their ears with these remarkable words: "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." Nor was this powerful command uttered without its effect. "He spake, and it was done:" he called with authority, and immediately "he that was dead sat up, and began to speak; and he restored him to his mother." He did not show him around to the multitude; but by a singu-

lar act of modesty and humanity, delivered him to his late afflicted, now astonished and rejoicing mother, to intimate, that in compassion to her great distress, he had wrought this stupendous miracle.

A holy and awful fear fell on all who heard and saw this astonishing event: "and they glorified God, saying, that a great prophet is risen up among us; and that God hath visited his people."

Here it must be observed, that as this miracle is liable to no objection, it therefore abundantly proves, that the power of the blessed Jesus was truly and absolutely divine. He met this funeral procession by accident. It was composed of the greatest part of the inhabitants of the city, who bewailed the disconsolate state of the afflicted widow, and therefore well knew that the youth was really dead. The powerful word, which called the breathless body to life, was delivered in an audible voice, before all the company, and even at the very gate of the city, the place of public resort.

This miracle, with others amply attested, abundantly evince the truth of our Saviour's mission, and that he was, indeed, the Son of God, the Redeemer of mankind.

CHAPTER XI.

The character of John the Baptist cleared and justified by the blessed Jesus.—He visits Simon the Pharisee.—Display of our Lord's humility and condescension.

We have taken notice, in a foregoing chapter, that Herod, incensed at the honest freedom of the Baptist reproving his adulterous commerce with Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, had cast him into prison; and in this state he still continued, though his disciples were suffered to visit and converse with him. In one of these visits they had given him an account of our Saviour's having elected twelve apostles to preach the Gospel, and of his miracles, particularly of his raising to life the daughter of Jairus, and the son of the widow of Nain.

On hearing these wonderful relations, the Baptist immediately despatched two of his disciples to Jesus, to ask him this important question: "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?"

Accordingly, the disciples of John came to Jesus, and proposed the question of their master, at the very time when he

"cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits, and to many that were blind he gave sight." Jesus, therefore, instead of directly answering their question, bid them return, and inform their master what they had seen: "Go," said he, "and show John again those things which ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them." *Matt.* xi. 4, 5. Go, tell your master, that the very miracles the prophet Isaiah so long since foretold should be wrought by the Messiah, you have yourselves seen performed.

It appears from the Scripture, that the Baptist, through the whole course of his ministry, had borne constant and ample testimony to our Saviour's divine mission; that he exhorted those who came to him, to rest their faith, not on himself, but on "him that should come after him;" and that as soon as he was acquainted who Jesus was, by a visible descent of the Holy Ghost, and a voice from heaven, he made it his business to dispose the Jews in general, and his own disciples in particular, to receive and reverence him, by testifying every where, that he was the "Son of God, the Lamb of God, who came down from heaven," and "spake the words of God," and "to whom God had given the Spirit, by measure."

The Baptist, therefore, well knew who Jesus was; and, consequently, he did not send his disciples to ask this question, to solve any doubt in his mind, concerning the Saviour of the world.

But it may be asked, what else could induce the Baptist to put such a question? To this, some answer, that he had no other intention than to satisfy his disciples that Jesus was the Messiah, so long expected among the Jews; and to engage them to follow a more perfect Master, especially, as he himself was now on the point of leaving the world.

This solution is doubtless partly right, but it does not seem to remove the whole difficulty, as it is plain from the very account recorded by the Evangelist, that the question had actually some relation to himself; and therefore we must remove the difficulty by another method. In order to which it must be remembered that John had long been confined in prison, that he was persuaded it was necessary for him to preach the Gospel, and prepare men to receive the kingdom of the Messiah; and for that reason, from the very time of his imprisonment, he earnestly expected the Messiah would exert his power to procure his release. But on hearing that Jesus had chosen twelve illiterate fishermen to preach the Gospel, had furnished them with miraculous powers, in order to enable them to perform so great a work; and that two persons of no consequence were raised

from the dead, while he was suffered to remain in prison, he began to think himself neglected, and his services disregarded. He therefore sent two of his disciples to ask him this question: "Art thou he that should come: or look we for another?" Not that he entertained any doubt of his being the true Messiah, intending nothing more, by asking the question, but to complain that Jesus had not acted the part which he thought the Messiah should have acted: and that this was really the case, seems sufficiently plain, from the caution added by our blessed Saviour himself. "And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me:" as if he had said, When you have informed your master of what you have seen and heard, tell him that he would do well not to be offended, either at the choice of the apostles, or that no miracle had been wrought for his release.

From this circumstance it is evident, that impatience on account of his long confinement, was the true reason for the Baptist's sending his disciples with this question to Jesus; and that the purport of the answer was, to teach him submission, in a case that was plainly above the reach of his judgment.

Lest the people, from this conversation, should imbibe any notion prejudicial to the character of the Baptist, our blessed Saviour thought fit to place it in a proper point of light. He praised his invincible courage and constancy, which was not to be overcome, or "like a reed to be shaken with the wind:" his austere and mortified life, for he was not "clothed in soft raiment," like those who wait in the palaces of kings; adding, that he was "a prophet, nay more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it was written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee." But subjoined, "Notwithstanding, he that is the least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he."

The propriety of this remark will appear, when it is considered that though the Baptist excelled all the prophets that were before him, yet the least inspired person in the kingdom of heaven, the least apostle or preacher of the Gospel, was greater than he; because, by constantly attending on Jesus, they were much better acquainted with his character, disposition, and doctrine, than the Baptist, who had only seen him transiently; wherefore, in respect of their personal knowledge of the Messiah, the apostles greatly excelled the Baptist. They were also employed, not in making preparation for the Messiah's kingdom, but in erecting it; and consequently greater than the Baptist with regard to the dignity of their office. Moreover, by having the gift of miracles, and the like, conferred on them, for that office, they were far superior to him with regard to illumination. They were so fully possessed by the spirit, that on all occasions they could declare the will of God, infallibly, be-

ing, as it were, living oracles; and having been the subjects of ancient prophecies, they had been long expected by the people of God.

Having thus shown the greatness of the Baptist's character, and wherein he was surpassed by the disciples, our blessed Saviour took occasion from thence to blame the perverseness of the age, in rejecting both his own and the Baptist's testimony.

It seems that the scribes and pharisees, seeing their pretended mortifications eclipsed by the real austerity of the Baptist, imprudently affirmed that his living in the deserts, his shunning the company of men, the coarseness of his clothing, the abstemiousness of his diet, and the other severities he practised, were the effects of his being possessed of an apostate spirit, or of a religious melancholy. "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say he hath a devil." *Matt.* xi. 18.

On the other hand, they would not listen to the heavenly doctrines preached by Christ, because he did not separate himself from society; attributing his free manner of living to a certain looseness of disposition, though they well knew that he observed the strictest temperance himself, and never encouraged the vices of others, either by dissimulation or example. "The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners; but wisdom is justified of her children." *Matt.* xi. 19.

He next proceeded to upbraid the several cities where his most wonderful works had been performed. For though they had heard him preach many awakening sermons, and seen him perform such astonishing miracles, such as would have converted Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom, cities infamous for their impiety, contempt of religion, pride, luxury, and debauchery; yet so great was their obstinacy, that they persisted in their wickedness, notwithstanding all he had done to convert them from the evil of their ways. "Wo unto thee Chorazin! wo unto thee Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven shall be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained unto this day. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee." *Matt.* xi. 21.

Having denounced these judgments on the cities which had neglected to profit by his mighty works, he concluded his discourse with these heavenly words: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my

yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy; and my burden is light." *Matt.* xi. 28, &c.

This affecting invitation must engage the most serious attention and particular regard of every reader; if the greatness of the speaker, the importance of his message, or the affectionate manner of his address, have any weight, have any force, have any power to affect the soul. It is Christ, the Almighty Redeemer, the Son of the Most High; he into whose hands, as our Mediator, all things are delivered of his Father; he unto whom all power in heaven and earth is given; even he who shall come in the clouds of heaven to judge all the inhabitants of the earth, and even by those words he hath himself delivered: it is this wonderful person who speaks, declaring at once his great willingness to receive, and his own supreme power to give, that rest and peace to the soul which should be the pursuit of every son of Adam, and is the gift of his religion only.

And that nothing may prevent our accepting this benevolent offer, he invites, with the most affectionate tenderness, not the great, the happy, and the powerful, nor the merry-hearted, or the sons of joy; but "all that labor, and are heavy laden," all that are under the bondage of sin and sorrow; and those he calls, not with a desire to expose their miseries, to punish their offences, or to display his own glory; but solely with a view to render them happy. "Come," says he, "come to me, I entreat you to come, I will give you rest;" I myself will relieve and release you from your heavy burdens; come to me, and you shall find perfect rest and peace to your souls. "Take my yoke upon you, for it is easy; and my burden, for it is light."

Is it possible that creatures of a day like us; can it be possible, "that mortals, who have but a short time to live, and are full of misery; who come up and are cut down like a flower; who flee as it were like a shadow, and never continue in one stay;" can it be possible, that they should reject and disregard a call so full of love, so full of affection, of such infinite consequence, of such unspeakable advantage? Can they reject the love of him who gave them rest, took their burdens upon himself; and who, after all his sufferings, desires them only to "come," to exchange their own oppressive burdens for his lightsome yoke; to abandon their sins and sorrows, and become his disciples; to love and obey him, and thence to be happy? Can we possibly despise such grace, refuse such offers, fly from such rest, thus freely proposed to us, and prefer the heavy yoke of sin, and the cruel pangs of a wounded conscience?

Having concluded this public address, one of the pharisees (named Simon) desired he would "eat with him:" the blessed

Jesus accepted the invitation, and accompanied him to his house, and sat down to meat.

He had not continued long at the table, before a woman, who had lately left the paths of vice for those of virtue, placed herself behind him, and, from a deep conviction of her former crimes, and the obligations she owed the Saviour of mankind, for bringing her to a sense of them, shed such quantities of tears, that they trickled down to his feet, which according to the custom of the country were then bare. But observing that her tears had wet the feet of her beloved instructor, she immediately wiped them with the hairs of her head, kissed them with the most ardent affection, and anointed them with precious ointment she had brought with her for that purpose.

It was a custom, among the inhabitants of the east, to pour fragrant oils on the heads of such guests as they intended particularly to honor, while they sat at meat; and probably the woman's original intention was to anoint Jesus in the usual manner. But being exceedingly humbled on account of her former crimes, she could not presume to take that freedom with him, and therefore poured it on his feet, to express at once the greatness of her love, and the profoundness of her humility.

The pharisee, who had attentively observed the woman, concluded from thence, that our Saviour could not be a prophet. "This man," said the pharisee to himself, "if he were a prophet, would have known who, and what manner of woman this is, that toucheth him; for she is a sinner." *Luke* vii. 39.

But though Simon spoke this only in his heart, his thoughts were not concealed from the great Redeemer of mankind, who to convince him that he was a prophet, and that he knew not only the characters of men, but even the secret thoughts of their hearts, immediately conversed with him on the very subject he had been revolving in his mind. He did not, indeed, expose him before the company, by relating what he had said in secret; but with remarkable delicacy pointed out to Simon alone, the unreasonableness of his thought." "Simon," said the blessed Jesus, "I have something to say to thee. There was a certain creditor, who had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?" Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And then immediately he applied this short parable to the subject of the woman, on which the pharisee had so unjustly reasoned with himself. "Simon," continued our Saviour, "seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs

of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment." *Luke*, vii. 44, &c.

This woman's kind services were in no danger of losing their reward from the blessed Jesus, who possessed the softer and finer feelings of human nature in their utmost perfection. Accordingly he added, in pursuance to the kind invitation he had before made to weary and heavy laden sinners; "Wherefore, I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loveth much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." *Luke*, vii. 47.

The blessed Jesus having thus commended the conduct of the woman to the company, and rebuked, with great delicacy, the unjust suspicions of Simon, turned himself to the woman, and in the kindest manner, assured her, that "her sins were forgiven." But the power he assumed, in forgiving sins, greatly offended the Jews, who, not being acquainted with his divinity, considered his speech as derogatory to the honor of the Almighty. Jesus, however, contemned their malicious murmurs, and repeated his assurance, telling the woman, that her faith had saved her, and bade her depart in peace.

The next day Jesus travelled from Capernaum to different parts of Galilee, going "through every village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God." *Luke* viii. 1. That is, he declared to the people the welcome tidings of the Almighty's being willing to be reconciled to the children of men, on condition of their repentance, and embracing the Gospel o the grace of God.

Leaving Galilee, he repaired to Jerusalem, to keep the passover, being the second feast of that kind since his public ministry. In this journey he was accompanied by certain pious women, "who ministered to him of their substance."

CHAPTER XII.

Miraculous Cure effected at the Pool of Bethesda.—Reproof of the superstition of the Jews, in condemning the performance of necessary works on the Sabbath Day.—After doing many acts of mercy and wonder, our blessed Lord is visited by his Mother and his Brethren, and makes a spiritual reflection on that incident.

Our Lord had no sooner entered the ancient city of Jerusalem, so long famous for being the dwelling-place of the Most High, than he repaired to the public bath, or pool, called, in the Hebrew tongue, "Bethesda," that is, "the House of Mercy," on account of the miracles wrought there, by the salutary effects of the water, at certain seasons. This bath was surrounded by five porches, or cloisters, in which those who frequented the place were sheltered both from the heat and cold; and were particularly serviceable to the diseased and infirm, who crowded thither to find relief in their afflictions.

These porches were now filled with a "great multitude of impotent folks, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down, at a certain season, into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first, after the troubling of the water, stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had." *John*, v. 3, 4.

Such is the account of this miraculous pool, given us by St. John the Evangelist. Many controversies have arisen concerning the place, the time, and the nature of the pool; questions which will perhaps, never be answered, because the pool of Bethesda is not mentioned by any of the Jewish historians.

The time when this miraculous effect took place is not precisely determined; but it is almost universally agreed, that it could not be long before the coming of our Saviour; and that the miracle was intended to lead us to the Son of God. For the gift of prophecy and of miracle had ceased among the Jews for above four hundred years; and therefore, to raise in them a more ardent desire for the coming of the Messiah, and to induce them to be more circumspect in observing the signs of his coming, God was pleased to favor them with this remarkable sign at Bethesda. And as the descendants of Jacob, in the last times, were not only very obnoxious to the irruptions and tyranny of the Gentiles, but had wholly lost their liberty; so God favored them with this eminent token of his favor, this wonderful pool, that they might not despair of the promises made to their forefathers being fulfilled.

The pool was situated near the Gate of Victims, which were figures of the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, that they might be convinced that God had a regard to the posterity of Abraham, and the worship which he himself had established; and might thus support themselves with the pleasing hope of the coming of the Messiah, the great angel of the covenant to his temple.

And as this miracle of the angel descending from heaven began when the coming of the Messiah was at hand, to advise them of the speedy and near approach of that promised salvation; so Christ entered these porches, which were situated without the temple, and performed the miracle we shall presently relate, to vindicate what was the true intent of this gift of healing, namely, to lead men to himself, "the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness:" and the waters were troubled only at this certain season of the passover, or at other stated periods, and one only healed each time the angel descended, to show them at once the weakness of the law, and the great difference between that and the gospel dispensation; and to teach them not to rest satisfied with the corporeal benefit only, as in the ministration of the angel, but to reflect attentively on the promises of the Messiah's approaching advent.

Having made these necessary remarks relative to the celebrated pool of Bethesda, we shall now return to the blessed Jesus, who thought proper to visit the porches of Bethesda, now crowded with persons laboring under various diseases.

Among these objects of pity, was one who had labored under his infirmity no less than thirty-and-eight years. The length and greatness of this man's afflictions, which were well known to the Son of God, were sufficient to excite his tender compassion, and make him the happy object to demonstrate that his power of healing was infinitely superior to the sanative virtue of the waters: while the rest were suffered to remain in their affliction.

Had not our Lord, at this time, restored any of them to health, he would have acted contrary to the general account which the Evangelists give of his goodness on other occasions, namely, "that he healed all who came to him." For such diseased persons, who left their habitations through a persuasion of his power and kindness, were proper objects of his mercy; whereas the sick in the cloisters of Bethesda, were no more so, than the other sick throughout the whole country, whom he could have cured with a single word of his mouth, had he been pleased to utter it.

Our compassionate Lord now approached the man whom he had singled out as the person on whom to manifest his power: he asked him whether he was desirous of being made whole?

A question which must induce the man to declare publicly his melancholy case, in the hearing of the multitude, and consequently render the miracle more conspicuous. And as this was done on the sabbath-day, our blessed Saviour seems to have wrought it to rouse the sons of Jacob from their lethargy, and convince the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that the long-expected Messiah was now come, and "had actually visited his people."

This distressed mortal beholding Jesus with a sorrowful countenance, and understanding that he meant, his being healed by the sanative virtues of the waters, answered, in a plaintive accent, "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me." *John*, v. 7. But the compassionate Redeemer of mankind soon convinced him that he was not to owe his cure to the salutary nature of the waters, but to the unbounded power of the Son of God; and accordingly said to him, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." Nor was the heavenly mandate any sooner uttered, than the impotent man, to the astonishment of the multitude, "was made whole, and took up his bed and walked." *John*, v. 9.

This great and miraculous cure could not fail of having a proper effect on the spectators: and his carrying his bed on the sabbath-day, which the Jews considered as a profanation of that day of rest, tended greatly to spread the fame of the miracle over the whole city. Nor did the man scruple to obey the commands of his kind physician: he well knew that the person who had the power of working such miracles must be a great prophet; and consequently, that his injunction could not be sinful. He, therefore, thought that he gave a sufficient answer to those Jews, who told him it was not lawful to carry his bed on the sabbath-day, to say, "He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk." *John*, v. 11. He that restored my strength in an instant, and removed, with a single word, a disease that had many years afflicted me, commanded me, at the same time, to take up my bed and walk; and surely a person endued with such power from on high, would not have ordered me to do any thing but what is truly right.

The votaries of infidelity should remember, that this signal miracle was performed in an instant, and even when the patient did not expect any such favor, nor even know the person to whom he owed it. No one, therefore, can pretend that imagination had any share in performing it. In short, the narrative of this miracle of mercy sufficiently proves, that the person who did it was really divine.

Soon after this miracle, Jesus met, in the temple, the man he had healed at the pool of Bethesda; and took the opportunity of reminding him, that as he was now freed from an infirmity

he had brought on himself by irregular courses, he should be careful to abstain from them for the future, lest the Almighty should think proper to afflict him in a more terrible manner. The man, overjoyed at having found the divine Physician who had relieved him from his melancholy condition, repaired to the scribes and pharisees, and with a heart overflowing with gratitude, innocently told them, that it was Jesus who had performed on him so astonishing a cure: being, doubtlessly, persuaded that they would rejoice at beholding so great a prophet.

But, alas! this was far from being the case: the rulers of Israel, instead of being pleased with the accounts of his many stupendous works of mercy and kindness, attacked him tumultuously in the temple, and carried him before the Sanhedrim, probably with an intention to take away his life, merely because he had done good on the sabbath-day.

Jesus, however, soon vindicated, by irrefragable arguments, the propriety of his works; observing that in doing works of mercy and beneficence on the sabbath-day, he only imitated his heavenly Father, the God of Jacob, whose providence was continually employed, without any regard to times or seasons, in doing good for the children of men. And, surely, he must be more than blind, who cannot discover that the Almighty, on the sabbath as well as on other days, supports the whole frame of the universe; and, by the invisible operations of his power, continues the motion of the heavenly bodies, on the revolution of which the vicissitudes of day and night, of summer and winter, so necessary to the production of the fruit of the earth, depend.

But Jewish prejudice could not be overcome by argument. Nay, the very observation increased their malice, as he claimed a peculiar relation to God; and by asserting that he acted like him, insinuated that he was equal to the Almighty himself.

The Saviour of the world did not deny this conclusion; showed that he acted agreeably to the will of God, and was equal with him in power, doing whatsoever he saw done by his Father: a convincing proof of his Father's love for him. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel." *John* v. 19, 20.

The blessed Jesus added, that he had not only power to heal the sick, but even to raise the dead: and that his Father had constituted him the universal Judge of the world: and, therefore, those who refused to honor him, refused to honor the

Father. But, whoever believed on him should inherit eternal life.

And that they might not doubt of the truth of his mission, but that he was actually invested with the power of raising the dead, he desired them to remember the undoubted instances he had already given of it, in restoring the daughter of Jairus, and the widow's son, of Nain, to life: and, consequently, that he could, on any future occasion, exert the same power: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." *John*, v. 25, &c.

The blessed Jesus added to this, Be not surprised at the power of raising a few individuals from the dead, and the authority of inflicting punishment on a number of the human race; I have a far greater power committed to me, even that of raising all the sons of Adam, at the last day, and of judging and rewarding every one of them according to his works. "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." *John*, v. 28, 29.

The great day of tribulation will distinguish between the good and the evil; for the tremendous Judge has been privy to all the actions of the sons of men, from the beginning to the end of time; nor has he any interest to pursue, or any inclination to satisfy, different from those of his heavenly Father. "And my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father, which hath sent me." *John*, v. 30.

Nothing could more evince the character of our Lord, than these assertions; though he did not require his hearers to believe them merely on his own testimony; he appealed to that of John, who was a burning and a shining light, and in whom for a time, they greatly rejoiced, because the prophetic spirit, which had so long ceased in Israel, was revived in that holy man. Nay, he appealed to a much greater testimony than that of John, even that of the God of Jacob himself, who was continually bearing witness to the truth of his mission, by the many miracles he empowered him to perform; and who, at his baptism, had, with an audible sound from the courts of heaven, declared him to be his beloved Son; a sound which multitudes of people had heard, and probably even some of those to whom he was now speaking.

The Jews had long expected the Messiah: but they had expected him to appear as a temporal prince, who would not only restore the former lustre of the throne of David, but infinitely augment it, and even place it over all the kingdoms of the earth. And hence they were unwilling to acknowledge Jesus for their Messiah, notwithstanding the proofs of his mission were so undeniable, because they must, in so doing, have abandoned all their grand ideas of a temporal kingdom. Our blessed Saviour, therefore, desired them to consult their own Scriptures, particularly, the writings of the prophets, where they would find the character of the Messiah displayed: and be fully convinced they were all fulfilled in his person.

He also gave them to understand, that the proofs of his mission were as full and clear as possible, being supported by the actions of his life, which in all things agreed with his doctrine: for he never sought the applause of men, or assumed secular power, but was always innocent and humble, though he well knew that these virtues made him appear little in the eyes of those who had no idea of a spiritual kingdom, but expected the Messiah would appear in all the pomp of secular authority.

In short, the fatal infidelity of the Jews was principally owing to their pride. They had long filled the minds of the people with grand ideas of the glory and power of the Messiah's kingdom: they had represented him as a potent prince, who was to appear at once, adorned with all the ensigns of power; and therefore to have ascribed that august character to a mere teacher of righteousness, destitute even of the ordinary advantages of birth, fortune, and erudition, would have been so plain a confession of their ignorance of the Scriptures, as must have exposed them to the ridicule and contempt of the whole people.

Our blessed Saviour added, that he himself should not only be their own accuser to the God of Jacob, for their infidelity; but Moses, their great legislator, in whom they trusted, would join in that unwelcome office; for, by denying him to be the Messiah, they denied the writings of that prophet, "For had ye," added he, "believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me: but if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" *John*, v. 46, 47.

Thus did the blessed Jesus assert himself to be the Son of God, the great Judge of the whole earth, and the Messiah promised by the prophets: and at the same time gave them such convincing proofs of his being sent from God, that nothing could be said against them.

Convincing as these proofs were, yet it did not in the least abate the malice of the scribes and pharisees; for the very next sabbath, upon his disciples plucking a few ears of corn as they

passed through the fields, and eating the grain after rubbing it out in their hands, they again exclaimed against this violation of the sabbath. But our blessed Saviour soon convinced them of their error, by showing, both from the example of David, and the constant practice of their own priests, who never omitted the necessary works of the temple on the sabbath-day, that works of necessity were often permitted, even though they broke a ritual command; that acts of mercy were the most acceptable services to God, of any whatever; that it was inverting the order of things, to suppose that "man was made for the sabbath, and not the sabbath for the benefit of man." Adding, that if the service of the temple should be said to claim a particular dispensation from the law of the sabbath, he and his disciples, whose business of promoting the salvation of mankind was of equal importance, might justly claim the same exemption; as they were carrying on a much nobler work, than the priest who attended on the service of the temple. Thus did our blessed Saviour prove, that works of mercy should not be left undone, though attended with the violation of some of the most sacred institutions of the ceremonial law.

Soon after this dispute with the scribes and pharisees, our blessed Saviour entered one of the synagogues of Jerusalem, on the sabbath-day, and found there a man whose right hand was withered.

The pharisees, who observed the compassionate Jesus advance towards the man, did not doubt but he would heal him: and therefore watched him attentively, that they might have something to accuse him of to the people. Their hypocrisy had arrived to that monstrous pitch, that they determined to injure his reputation, by representing him as a sabbath-breaker, if he dared to heal the man, while they themselves were profaning it by an action which would have polluted any day; namely, of seeking an opportunity of destroying a person who had never injured them, but done many good actions for the sons of Jacob, and was continually laboring for their eternal welfare.

The Saviour of the world was not unapprized of these malicious intentions. He knew their designs, and defied their impotent power, by informing them of the benevolent action he designed, though he well knew they would exert every art they were masters of, in order to put him to death.

Therefore, when our Saviour ordered the man to show himself to the whole congregation, in order to excite their pity, these hypocritical teachers declared, in the strongest terms, the unlawfulness of his performing even such beneficent actions, on the sabbath: "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day?" They did not, however, ask this question with an intention to hinder him from performing the miracle. No, they had a very

different intention than that of accusing him. For they hoped he would have declared openly that such actions were lawful; or, at least, make no reply to their demands, which they would have construed into an acknowledgment of what they asserted.

Nor did our Lord fail to expose their malice and superstition; and accordingly asked them, "Is it lawful, on the Sabbath-day, to do good or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?" *Luke*, vi. 9. Is it not more lawful for me, on the Sabbath-day, to save men's lives, than for you to seek my death, without the least provocation? This severe rebuke would admit of no answer, and therefore they held their peace, pretending not to understand his meaning. He therefore made use of an argument, which stupidity itself could not fail of understanding, and which all the art of these hypocritical sophists were unable to answer. "What man," said the blessed Jesus, "shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath-day, will he not lay hold on it and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath-day." *Matt.* xii. 11, 12.

The former question they pretended not to understand, and therefore held their peace; but this argument effectually silenced them, though they were determined not to be convinced. This unconquerable obstinacy grieved the spirit of the meek, the benevolent Jesus, who beheld them "with anger," that, if possible, an impression might be made, either on them, or the spectators.

But at the same time that he testified his displeasure towards the pharisees, he uttered words of comfort to the lame man, bidding him stretch forth his hand: and he no sooner obeyed the divine command, "than it was restored whole as the other."

This astonishing work, performed in the midst of a congregation, many of whom, doubtless, knew the man while he labored under this infirmity, and in presence of his most inveterate enemies, must certainly have had a great effect on the minds of the people, especially as they saw it had effectually silenced the pharisees, who had nothing to offer, either against the miracle itself, or the reasonings and power of him who had performed it.

But though these whited sepulchres, as our blessed Saviour justly termed them, were silenced by his arguments, and astonished at his miracles, yet they were so far from abandoning their malicious intentions, that they joined their inveterate enemies, the Herodians or Sadducees, in order to consult how they might destroy him: well knowing, that if he continued his preaching, and working of miracles, the people would wholly follow him, and their own power soon become contemptible.

Jesus, however, thought proper to prevent their malicious designs, by retiring into Galilee, and there pursuing his benevolent purposes.

This retreat could not, however, conceal him from the multitude, who flocked to him from all quarters, bringing with them the sick and maimed, who were all healed and sent away in peace.

Some of his disciples, however, who still entertained the popular opinion, that the Messiah would establish his kingdom by force, and bear down all opposition, were extremely mortified to find their master retreat from so weak an enemy. But had they read with attention the prophecy of Isaiah, they would have known that this weakness was one part of the Messiah's character. "Behold my Servant, whom I have chosen; my Beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust." *Matt.* xii. 18, &c.

Though there are several small variations between this prophecy, as quoted by St. Matthew, and the original, in the book of Isaiah; yet the sense in both places is the same. And we cannot help observing, that there is in this prophecy an evident difference between the publication of the Jewish religion, by Moses, and the Christian religion, by Christ. The doctrine of salvation, as taught by Moses, extended only to the single nation of the Jews; whereas that published by the Messiah extended to every nation and people under heaven. Accordingly our blessed Saviour, by retiring into Galilee, fulfilled the first part of this famous prophecy: "He shall shew judgment to the Gentiles;" for the Evangelist tells us, great multitudes came to him from beyond Jordan, and from Syria, about Tyre and Sidon.

Being now returned into Galilee, there was brought unto him a blind and dumb man, possessed with a devil; but Jesus, with a single word, cast out the evil spirit, and restored the noble faculties of sight and speech. A miracle so surprising could not fail of astonishing the numerous spectators, who now seemed convinced that the person endued with such remarkable power, could be no other than the Messiah.

The pharisees, who were come thither from Jerusalem, filled with malice at seeing him perform so many miracles, impiously asserted, contrary to the conviction of their own minds, that they were wrought by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.

So blasphemous a declaration could not be supposed to escape a censure from the Son of God, who addressing himself both to them and the people, demonstrated the absurdity of the calumny, by an argument drawn from the common affairs of life. "Every kingdom," said the blessed Jesus, "divided against itself, is brought to desolation: and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself, how then shall his kingdom stand?" Your calumny is malicious and absurd; it is malicious, because your own consciences are convinced of its falsehood; and it is absurd, because Satan cannot assist me in preaching the kingdom of God, and destroying all the works of darkness, unless he be divided against himself, and destroy all the works of his own kingdom. Adding, "And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you." Ye did not impute the miracles of your prophets to Beelzebub, but received them, on the evidence of their miracles, as the messengers of God. But ye reject me, who work greater and more numerous miracles than they, and impute them to the power of evil spirits. Is this conduct reconcileable? These prophets, therefore, shall be your judges, they shall condemn you. But as it is true, that I cast out devils by the assistance of the Almighty, it follows that the kingdom of God, so long expected, is going to be established.

But this blasphemy, however great, may be forgiven you, because stronger and more evident proofs of my mission may convince you of your sins, and induce you to embrace the offers of eternal life. And the time is coming, when the Son of Man shall be raised from the dead, by the power of the Holy Ghost, the gifts of miracles showered on almost all believers, and the nature of the Messiah's kingdom more fully explained, in order to remove the foundation of your prejudice, the expectation of a temporal prince. But if you then shut your eyes, and speak evil against the Holy Ghost, by affirming that his gifts and miracles proceed from the prince of darkness, it shall never be forgiven you: because it is a sin you cannot possibly repent of, as no greater means of conviction will be offered; but you shall be punished for it, both in this world, and in that which is to come. "Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." *Matt.* xii. 31 32.

This solemn sentence, on the sin against the Holy Ghost, was probably now pronounced by our Saviour to awaken the consciences of the pharisees, by a sense of their danger, if they continued in such detestable calumnies, when their own hearts sufficiently told them, that they flowed entirely from malice and resentment.

But all his reasonings and threatenings had no effect on this perverse set of mortals, who sarcastically answered, "Master, we would see a sign from thee." Strange stupidity! had not he, a short time before, cast out a devil, and restored the faculties of sight and speech to the blind and dumb? cleansed lepers, raised the dead, and even rebuked the winds and waves? Were not these signs sufficient to convince the most bigoted mortal? What therefore could these stubborn doctors of the law require? Well might the great Saviour of the world call them "a wicked and adulterous generation;" for surely they could boast of no part of the faith and piety of Abraham, their great progenitor. Persons of such incorrigible inclinations certainly merited no indulgence; and, accordingly, Jesus told them they should have no other sign given them, but what they every day beheld, the sign of the prophet Jonas, who by living three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, was a type of the Son of God, who should continue three days and three nights in the chambers of the tomb. Adding, that the Ninevites repented at the preaching of the prophet Jonas; and the queen of the South undertook a long journey to Jerusalem, to hear the wisdom of Solomon; but they refused to attend to the doctrines of an infinitely greater prophet than Jonas, or listen to one much wiser than Solomon. Concluding his discourse with a very apposite parable, tending to show the great danger of resisting conviction, and breaking through resolutions, as such actions tended entirely to render men more obdurate and abandoned than before.

During this dispute with the pharisees, Jesus was informed that his mother and brethren, or kinsmen, were without, desiring to speak to him: upon which the blessed Jesus stretched out his hands towards his disciples, and said, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father, which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." *Matt.* xii. 49, 50. This glorious truth should be stamped on the minds of all believers, as it shows that every one, of what nation or kindred soever, who is brought into subjection to the will of God, is allied to the blessed Jesus, and entitled to the salvation of God.

CHAPTER XIII.

Our Lord delivers many remarkable parables, and explains several of them.—Returns to Nazareth, and commissions the Twelve Apostles, whom he had before selected as his constant attendants and followers, to disperse and preach the Gospel of the kingdom of God, in divers places.—Circumstances of the death of John the Baptist.

THE miraculous power of our blessed Lord, both in performing the most astonishing acts, and confuting the most learned of the pharisaical tribe, who endeavored to oppose his mission and doctrine, brought together so great a multitude, that he repaired to the sea-side; and for the better instructing the people, entered into a ship, and the whole multitude stood on the shore. Being thus conveniently seated, he delivered many precepts of the utmost importance, beginning with the parable of the sower, who cast his seed on different kinds of soil, the products of which were answerable to the nature of the ground, some yielding a large increase, others nothing at all. By this striking similitude, the blessed Jesus represented the different kinds of hearers, and the different manner in which they are affected by the precepts of religion. Some wholly suppress the doctrines delivered, in others they produce the fruits of righteousness, in proportion to the goodness of their hearts. And surely a more proper parable could not have been delivered, when such multitudes came to hear his discourses, and so few practised the precepts, or profited by the heavenly doctrines they contained.

To vindicate the propriety of our Saviour's conduct, it may not be amiss here to observe, that parables were very familiar to the oriental nations, particularly those of Palestine, as we learn from the concurrent testimony of all the eastern writers; and it was the general method, both of the old prophets, John the Baptist, and our blessed Saviour himself, to allude to things present, and such as immediately offered themselves. Our Saviour also, by using this manner of teaching, fulfilled the prophecies concerning the Messiah, relating to his method of instruction; it being foretold, "that he should open his mouth in parables; and utter things which had been kept secret from the foundation of the world." It is therefore no wonder that the mysteries and secrets of the kingdom of heaven are generally the subject of our Saviour's parables; his grand and fundamental doctrines being delivered in clear, plain, and express terms, but sometimes heightened and enlivened by the addition of beautiful parables. Similitudes of this kind are, indeed, the

most simple method of teaching, and best accommodated to the apprehension of the vulgar and unlearned, and very easy to be remembered, understood, and applied. At the same time, they are the finest veil for mysteries, and the best means of convicting the proud and obstinate, as well as concealing from them those truths which their perverseness and infidelity have rendered them unworthy of having more clearly displayed.

But to return. The parable being finished, his disciples asked why he taught the people in parables? to which he answered, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables; because they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand." *Matt.* xiii. 11, &c. As if he had said, You, my beloved disciples, who are of a humble, docile temper, and are willing to use means, and resort to me for instruction, and the explanation of the truths I deliver; to you it shall be no disadvantage, that they are clothed in parables. Besides, my discourses are plain and intelligible to all unprejudiced minds; truth will shine through the veil in which it is arrayed, and the shadow will guide you to the substance. But these proud, these self-conceited pharisees, who are so blinded by their own prejudices, that they will neither hear nor understand a thing plainly delivered; to them I preach in parables, and hide the great truths of the Gospel, under such metaphorical robes as will for ever conceal them from persons of their temper. They have, therefore, brought upon themselves this blindness, that in seeing they see not, and this wilful deafness, that in hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

The blessed Jesus added, that there was no reason for their being surprised at what he had told them, as it had long before been predicted by the prophet Isaiah. "By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing, ye shall see, and shall not perceive. For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." *Matt.* xiii. 14, 15. There is some variation in the words, as quoted by the Evangelist, and those found in Isaiah, but the import of both is the same, and may be paraphrased in the following manner: "The sons of Jacob, shall, indeed, hear the doctrines of the Gospel, but not understand them; and see the miracles by which these doctrines are confirmed, without perceiving them to be wrought by the finger of God: not because the evidences produced by

the Messiah are insufficient, but because the corruption of their hearts will not suffer them to examine and weigh these evidences; for the sins of this people have hardened their hearts: their pride and vanity have shut their ears, and their hypocrisy and bigoted adherence to traditions and forced interpretations of the law and the prophets, have closed their eyes, lest the brilliant rays of truth should strike their sight with irresistible force, and the powerful voice of divine wisdom force their attention, and command their assent; being unwilling to be directed to the paths of righteousness which lead to the heavenly Canaan."

Such are the reasons given by our blessed Saviour, for his teaching the people by parables; and to enhance the great privilege his disciples enjoyed, he added, that many patriarchs and prophets of old had earnestly desired to see and hear these things which the people now saw and heard, but were denied that favor; God having, till then, showed them to his most eminent saints in shadows only, and as they lay brooding in the womb of futurity. "But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." *Matt.* xiii. 16.

Our Lord having by these means excited the desire of his disciples, proceeded to explain to them the parable of the sower. "The sower," said he, "sowed the word." The seed, therefore, implies the doctrines of true religion; and the various kinds of soil the various kinds of hearers. The ground by the highway side, which is apt to be beaten by men treading upon it, is an image of those who have their hearts so hardened with impiety, that though they hear the gospel preached, it makes no impression on their callous hearts, because they either hear it inattentively, or quickly forget the words of the preacher. And surely no similitude could more strongly represent this insensibility, and inattention, than the beaten ground, bordering on the highway, into which this seed never entering, it is picked up by the fowls of the air, or trodden in pieces by the feet of passengers. "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart; this is he which received seed by the way-side." *Matt.* xiii. 19.

We must not suppose, that the devil has the power of robbing hearers of their knowledge, by an immediate act of his own, because he is said to catch away the word sown in their hearts, but by the opportunities they give the deceiver of mankind, for exerting his strong temptations, and particularly those which have a relation to their commerce with men: a circumstance that could not escape the observation of St. Luke, who

tells us, that the seed was trodden down, or destroyed, by their own headstrong lusts, which like so many birds, pinched with hunger, devour the seed implanted in their minds.

The rocky ground represents those hearers who so far receive the word into their hearts, that it discovers itself by good resolutions, which are, perhaps, accompanied with a partial reformation of some sins, and the temporary practice of some virtues. But the word has not sunk deep enough in their minds to remain constantly there; its abode with them is only for a season: and therefore, when persecution ariseth for the sake of the Gospel, and such hearers are exposed to tribulations of any kind, the blade, which sprung up quickly, withers, for want of being watered with the stream of piety and virtue; like the vegetable productions of the earth, when deprived of the enlivening rains and dews of heaven, and a want of earth to contain this balmy fluid, when the rays of the sun dart in full vigor upon them. "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it: Yet he hath not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth, because of the word, by and by he is offended." *Matt.* xiii. 20, 21.

The ground encumbered with thorns, which sprung up with the seed, and choked it, represents all those who receive the word into hearts already filled with the cares of this world, which will, sooner or later, destroy whatever good resolutions are raised by the word. The cares of the world are compared to thorns, not only because of their pernicious tendency in choking the word, but because they cannot be eradicated without great pain and difficulty. In this parable, the hearers of this denomination are distinguished from those who receive the seed on stony ground, not so much the effect of the word upon their minds, as the different natures of each; for in both the seed sprung up, but brought forth no fruit. Those represented by the stony ground have no depth of soil; those by the thorny ground are choked by the cares of this world; by the deceitfulness of riches, and the love of pleasures, which, sooner or later, will stifle the impressions of the word; by which means they at last become as unfruitful as the former. But both are distinguished from those hearers represented by the seed sown by the highway side, that they receive the word, and, in some measure, obey its precepts. Whereas, the first never receive the word at all, hearing without attention; or if they do attend, forget it immediately. "He also that received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." *Matt.* xiii. 22.

In opposition tc these unprofitable hearers of the word, others are represented, whose goodness of heart, signified under the similitude of the soil, receive the word with gladness, and bring forth large increase. These are convinced of the truths delivered, and practise them, though contrary to their prejudices, and opposite to their inclinations. All those bring forth, some a hundred-fold, some sixty, and some thirty, in proportion to the different degrees of strength in which they possess the graces necessary to the profitable hearing the word of righteousness.

Having ended this interpretation of the parable of the sower, he continued his discourse to his disciples, explaining to them, by the similitude of a lighted lamp, the use they were expected to make of all the excellent instructions they had and should receive from him. Their understanding, he told them, was to illuminate the world, as a brilliant lamp, placed in the centre of an apartment, enlightens the whole. He added, that though some of the doctrines of the Gospel were then concealed from the people, because of their prejudices, yet the time would come, when these doctrines should be preached openly and plainly through the world; and therefore it was their duty, to whom God had given both an opportunity of hearing, and a capacity of understanding these doctrines, to listen with the utmost attention. "Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed, and not to be set on a candlestick? For there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested: neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.—If any man have ears to hear, let him hear." *Mark*, iv. 21, 22, 23.

But as it was a matter of great importance that the disciples who were to publish the Gospel throughout the whole world, should listen with the closest attention to his sermons, he repeated his admonitions: adding, that their present privileges and future rewards should be both proportioned to the fidelity and care with which they discharged the important trust committed to them. "Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear shall more be given." *Mark*, iv. 24.

Having explained these parables to his disciples, he turned himself to the multitude on the shore, and, in his usual endearing accent, delivered the parable of the enemy sowing tares among the wheat; and on their first appearance astonishing the husbandman's servants, who knew the field had been sowed with good seed; and in order to free the wheat from such injurious plants, proposed to root them up. But this the husbandman absolutely refused, lest, by extirpating the one, they injured the other; adding, that he would take care, at the time

of harvest, to give orders to his reapers, that they should first gather the tares into bundles, and burn them, and afterwards carry the wheat to the granaries. "The kingdom of heaven," said the blessed Jesus, "is likened unto a man, which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came, and said unto him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay: lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." *Matt.* xiii. 24, &c.

This parable of the tares being ended, he spake another, concerning the seed which sprung up secretly, representing the gradual and silent progress of the Gospel among the sons of men. He informed them, under this similitude, that the husbandman does not, by any efficacy of his own, cause the seed he casts into the ground to grow, but leaves it to be nourished by the teeming virtues of the soil, and the enlivening rays of the sun; in the same manner Jesus and his apostles, having taught men the doctrine of true religion, were not by any miraculous force to constrain the wills, far less, by the terrors of fire and sword, to interpose visibly in the assistance of it; but suffer it to spread by the secret influences of the Holy Spirit, till it attained its full effect. And as the husbandman cannot, by the most diligent observation, perceive the corn in this field extending its dimensions as it grows; so the ministers of Christ were not, at the first planting of the Gospel, to expect to see it make quick progress through the world.

The ministers of religion, must not, however, from hence imagine, that religion will flourish without their carefully and importunately pressing its precepts upon the minds of their hearers. The parable was spoken to inform the Jews in particular, that neither the Messiah nor his servants would employ force to establish the kingdom of God, as they vainly expected the Messiah would have done; and to prevent the disciples from fainting, when they saw that an immediate and rapid success did not attend their labors. "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringing forth fruit of herself: first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn

in the ear But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." *Mark*, iv. 26, &c.

The next parable he spake to the multitude was that of the mustard-seed, which, though very small when sown, becomes, in Palestine, and other parts of the east, a full spreading tree. Intimating to his audience, under this similitude, that notwithstanding the Gospel would at first appear contemptible, from the ignominy flowing from the crucifixion of its author, the strictness of its precepts, the weakness of the persons by whom it was preached, and the small number and mean condition of those who received it; yet being founded on truth itself, it would increase to an astonishing magnitude, filling the whole earth, and affording spiritual nourishment to persons of all nations, who should enjoy all the privileges of the Messiah's kingdom, equally with the Jews. And surely a more proper parable could not have been uttered, to encourage his disciples to persevere in the work of the ministry, notwithstanding it would in the beginning be opposed by the learned, the rich, and the powerful. "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. Which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree: so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." *Matt.* xiii. 31, 32.

Our blessed Saviour concluded his discourse to the multitude, with the parable of the leaven, to intimate the influence of the doctrine of the Gospel on the minds of particular persons. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." *Matt.* xiii. 33.

While Jesus was thus employed in his heavenly Father's business, his mother and brethren came a second time, desiring to see him. In all probability they feared that the continued fatigue of preaching would injure his health; and were therefore desirous of taking him with them, that he might refresh himself. But the blessed Jesus, who was never weary of doing good, answered his indulgent parent as before: "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it." *Luke*, viii. 21.

Night approaching, Jesus dismissed the multitude, and returned to the house in Capernaum, where he abode, and there explained to his disciples the parable of the tares in the field.—The husbandman, said our blessed Saviour, is the Son of man; the field, the Christian Church, planted in different parts of the world; the wheat are those Christians who obey the precepts of the Gospel, and are supported by the principles of the

Holy Spirit; and the tares, the bad Christians seduced into the paths of vice, by the temptations of the devil. Our blessed Lord, therefore, by this parable, represented the mixed nature of the church on earth, the dismal end of the hypocrites, and those who forget God; for these may deceive for a time, by assuming the robes of virtue and religion; yet they will not fail, sooner or later, to betray themselves, and show that they are only wolves in sheep's clothing. At the same time, however sincerely we may wish to see the church freed from her corrupted members, we must not extirpate them by force, lest, being deceived by outward appearances, we also destroy the wheat, or sound members. We must leave this distinction to the awful day, when the great Messiah will descend to judgment; for then a final separation will be made: the wicked cast into torments, that will never have an end, but the righteous received into life eternal, where they "shall shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their father." *Matt.* xiii. 43.

Our Lord, on this occasion delivered the parable of the treasure hid in the field, and of the pearl of great price. The former was designed to teach us that some meet with the Gospel, as it were by accident, and without seeking after it, agreeably to the prediction of the prophet, "That God is found of them that seek him not." But with regard to the latter, it was designed to intimate, that men sometimes take the utmost pains to become acquainted with the great truths of the Gospel. And surely the similitudes, both of the treasure and pearl, are very naturally used to signify the Gospel; the former, as it enriches all who possess it; and the latter, because it is more precious than rubies.

But that the disciples must expect that the Christian church would consist of a mixed multitude of people, the good blended with the bad, in such a manner that it would be difficult to separate them; he compared it to a net cast into the sea, which gathered fish of every kind, good and bad, which were separated when the net was drawn to land; that is, at the last great day of account, when the righteous will be conveyed to life eternal, and the wicked cast into everlasting misery.

Our blessed Saviour, having finished these parables, asked his disciples, if they understood them? and upon their answering in the affirmative, he added, that every teacher of the Gospel ought to resemble a person whose house was completely furnished, and brought "forth out of his treasures, things new and old."

Soon after, Jesus left Capernaum, and repaired to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and preached in the synagogue the glad tidings of the kingdom of God; but his townsmen, though astonished at his doctrine, could not overcome the pre-

judices they had conceived against him, on account of the meanness of his family, and thence refused to own him for the Messiah. Our Saviour, finding them the same incorrigible persons as when he visited them before, departed from them, and taught in the neighboring villages. They, in common with all the Jews, were strangers to the true character of the Messiah, whom they considered as a temporal prince; and therefore could not bear that a person so mean as Jesus appeared to be, should perform works peculiar to that idol of their vanity, a glorious triumphant secular Messiah.

While our Lord resided in the neighborhood of Nazareth, he sent out his disciples to preach in different parts of Galilee, and to proclaim the glad tidings that God was then going to establish the kingdom of the Messiah, wherein he would be worshipped in spirit and in truth. And in order that they might confirm the doctrines they delivered, and prove that they had received their commission from the Son of God, they were endowed with the power of working miracles. How long they continued their preaching, cannot be known, but it is reasonable to think they spent a considerable time in it, preaching in several parts of Judea.

The miracles, which the apostles wrought, raised the expectations of men higher than ever: the people were astonished to see the disciples of Jesus perform so many miracles; and then concluded, that our Saviour must be greater than any of the old prophets, who could not transmit the power they enjoyed to any other. This extraordinary circumstance could not fail of spreading his fame through the whole country: it even reached the ears of Herod, the Tetrarch, who, fearing a person of such extraordinary abilities, was very uneasy, which, some of his courtiers observing, endeavored to remove, telling him, that one of the old prophets was risen from the dead; but this did not satisfy him, and he declared that he believed it was John the Baptist risen from the dead. "And he said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him." *Matt.* xiv. 2.

The Evangelists having on this account mentioned John the Baptist, informs us that Herod had put him to death; but when this happened is uncertain.

It has already been observed, that Herod had cast John into prison for his boldness in reproving him for the adulterous commerce in which he lived with his brother's wife. The sacred writers have not told us how long he continued in prison; but it is plain from his two disciples, who came from him to our Saviour, that his followers did not forsake him in his melancholy condition. Nay, Herod himself both respected and feared

him, knowing that he was highly and deservedly beloved by the people; he consulted him often, and in many things followed his advice. But Herodias, his brother's wife, with whom he lived in so shameful a manner, being continually uneasy, lest Herod should be prevailed upon to set him at liberty, sought all opportunities to destroy him; and at last an incident happened, which enabled her to accomplish her intention.

The king having, on his birth-day, made a great feast for his friends, she sent her daughter Salome, whom she had by Philip, her lawful husband, into the saloon, to dance before the king and his guests. Her performance was remarkably elegant, and so charmed Herod, that he promised, with an oath, to give her whatever she asked.

Having obtained so remarkable a promise, she ran to her mother, desiring to know what she should ask? and was instructed by that wicked woman, to require the head of John the Baptist. Her mother's desire, doubtless, surprised Salome, as she could not possibly see the use of asking what would be of no service to her. But Herodias would take no denial, and peremptorily insisted on her demanding the head of the Baptist. Accordingly, she returned to Herod, "I will thou give me, by and by, in a charger, the head of John the Baptist."

So cruel a request thrilled every breast; the gaiety of the king vanished; he was vexed and confounded. But being unwilling to appear either rash, fickle, or false, before a company of the first persons of his kingdom for rank and character, he commanded the head to be given her: not one of the guests having the courage to speak a single word in behalf of an innocent man, or attempt to divert Herod from his mad purpose, though he gave them an opportunity of doing it, by signifying to them that he performed his oath, merely out of regard to the company. Thus Herod, through a misplaced regard to his oath and his guests, committed a most unjust and cruel action; an action that will for ever brand his memory with dishonor, and render his very name detestable to the latest posterity.

Soon after the command was given, the head of that venerable prophet, whose rebukes had struck Herod with awe in his loosest moments, and whose exhortations had often excited him to virtuous actions, was brought, pale and bloody, in a charger, and given to the daughter of Herodias, in the presence of all the guests.

The young lady eagerly received the bloody present, and carried it to her mother, who enjoyed the whole pleasure of revenge, and feasted her eyes with the sight of her enemy's head, now silent and harmless. But she could not silence the name of the Baptist; it became louder, filling the earth and

heavens, and publishing to every people and nation this woman's baseness and adultery.

Thus fell that great and good man, John the Baptist, who was proclaimed, by our blessed Saviour himself, to be "more than a prophet." Josephus tells us that his whole crime consisted in exhorting the Jews to the love and practice of virtue; and, in the first place, to piety, justice, and regeneration, or newness of life; and not by the abstinence from this or that particular sin, but by an habitual purity of mind and body.

It may not be improper on this occasion, to hint, that the history of this birth-day, transmitted to posterity in the Scriptures, stands a perpetual beacon, to warn the great, the gay, and the young, to beware of dissolute mirth. Admonished by so fatal an example, they should be more careful to maintain, in the midst of their jollity, an habitual recollection of spirit, lest reason, at any time, enervated by the pleasures of sense, should slacken the rein of wisdom, or let it drop, though only for a moment; because their headstrong passions, ever impatient of control, may catch the opportunity, and rush with them into follies, whose consequences will be unspeakably, perhaps eternally bitter.

CHAPTER XIV.

Our Lord adds to the confirmation of his Mission and Doctrine, by working a miracle in the wilderness of Bethsaida.—The people, struck with the power and grace of the blessed Jesus, propose to raise him to the earthly dignity of King.—Peter, by means of his blessed Master, performs a miracle in walking upon the sea.—Our Lord's improvement of the miracles wrought in the Wilderness, introduced in a Discourse delivered in the Synagogue of Capernaum.

The disciples were so alarmed at the cruel fate of the Baptist, whose memory they highly revered, that they returned from their mission, and assisted in performing the last offices to the body of their old master, many of the apostles having been originally disciples of John. As soon as these pious rites were over, they repaired to Jesus, and told him all that had happened.

Their compassionate Master, on hearing this melancholy news, retired with them by sea into a desert place, belonging to Bethsaida, that by retirement, meditation, and prayer, they

might be refreshed and recruited for their spiritual labors; and at the same time, leave an example to us that we should often retire from the noise and hurry of the world, and offer up the most fervent prayers to our heavenly Father.

But the multitude attended so closely, that their departure was not long concealed; and great numbers of people repaired to the place, where they supposed Jesus and his disciples had secluded themselves. Struck with the greatness of his miracles on those that were sick, and anxious to hear more instructions from the mouth of so divine a teacher, no difficulties were too great for them to surmount, nor any place too retired for them to penetrate, in search of their admired preacher.

Nor was the beneficent Saviour of the world regardless of their pious esteem. He saw them, he was "moved with compassion" towards them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd, multitudes of people without a pastor, a large harvest without laborers; motives abundantly sufficient to excite compassion in the Son of God.

The situation of those numerous throngs of people scattered abroad, without a guide, without a guardian; a large flock of defenceless sheep, without a single shepherd to defend them from the jaws of the infernal wolf, was truly deplorable; the blessed Jesus, therefore, that "good Shepherd, who came to lay down his life for the sheep," was moved with pity towards them: the same pity which brought him from the courts of heaven, for the sake of his lost and wandering sheep in the desert, now brought him to this multitude of people, whom he instructed in the doctrines of eternal life; and with his usual goodness healed all the sick among them.

Intentionally devoted to teaching and healing the people, our blessed Saviour did not perceive the day to wear away, and that the greatest part of it was already spent: but his disciples, too anxious about the things of this world, thought proper to advise him of it; as if the Son of God wanted any directions from man. The day, said his disciples, is now far advanced, and the place a solitary desert, where neither food nor lodging can be procured: it would therefore be convenient to dismiss the people, that they may repair to the towns or villages, on tne borders of the wilderness, and provide themselves with food and lodging; for they had nothing to eat.

But our Lord prevented that trouble by telling them there was no necessity for sending the people away to procure victuals for themselves, as they might satisfy the hunger of the multitude, by giving them to eat. And at the same time, to prove what opinion his disciples entertained of his power, addressed himself to Philip, who was well acquainted with the country, and said, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?"

PETER'S WANT OF FAITH.

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"But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me."—MATT. XIV. 30.

Philip, astonished at the seeming impossibility of procuring a supply for so great a multitude, with the small sum of money which he knew was their all, and forgetting the extent of his Master's power, answered, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little." *John*, vi. 7.

Our blessed Saviour might now have put the same question to Philip, that he did on another occasion: "Have I been so long a time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" *John*, xiv. 9. Hast thou beheld so many miracles, and art still ignorant that I can supply food, not only for this people, but for all the sons of men, and for "the cattle upon a thousand hills?"

But he contented himself with answering, "Give ye them to eat." The twelve, not yet comprehending the design of their Master, repeated the objection of Philip; but added, that they were willing to expend their whole stock, in order to procure as large a supply as possible. "Shall we go," said they, "and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, that they may eat?"

But this was by no means the design of their great Master, who, instead of making a direct answer to their question, asked them, "How many loaves have ye?" How much provision can be found among this multitude? Go and see.

The disciples obeyed the command of their Master; and Andrew soon returned, to inform him, that the whole stock amounted to no more than five barley-loaves, and two small fishes; a quantity so inconsiderable, that it scarcely deserved notice. "What are they," said this disciple, "among so many?" What, indeed, would they have been among such a multitude of people, if they had not been distributed by the creating hand of the Son of God?

Jesus, notwithstanding the smallness of the number, ordered them to be brought to him; and immediately commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, with which the place abounded, directing his disciples at the same time to range them in a regular order, by hundreds and fifties in a company, each company forming a long square, containing a hundred in a rank, and fifty in a file, that the number might be more easily ascertained, and the people more regularly served.

In obedience to his command, the people sat down in the manner they were ordered, big with the expectations of what this uncommon preparation portended: while the great Master of the banquet stood ready to supply the necessities of all his guests; a banquet where, though they had no canopy but the azure sky, no table but the verdant turf, where their food was only coarse barley-bread and dried fishes, and their drink only water from a bubbling fountain, yet displayed more real gran-

deur, by the presence of the divine Master of it, than the royal feast of gorgeous Ahasuerus, or the splendid entertainment of the imperious Nebuchadnezzar.

The multitude being seated, Jesus took the loaves and fishes into his hands in the sight of all the people, that they might be convinced of the small quantity of provisions that were then before them, and that they could only expect to be fed by his supernatural power. But that hand, which had constantly sustained nature, could now easily multiply these five loaves and two fishes: for, as the Psalmist elegantly observes, "He openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness." Accordingly, he looked up to heaven, returned thanks to God, the liberal giver of all good things, for his infinite beneficence in furnishing food for all flesh, and for the power he had conferred on him, of relieving mankind by his miracles, particularly for that he was about to work. This done, he blessed them, and so peculiarly efficacious was his blessing, that these five barley-loaves and two fishes were multiplied into a quantity sufficient to supply the wants of five thousand men, besides women and children, who, on the most favorable supposition, must amount to an equal number. "And Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes, as much as they would." *John*, vi. 11.

Thus did the compassionate and powerful Redeemer feed at least ten thousand people with five barley-loaves and two small fishes, giving a magnificent proof both of his power and goodness. For after all had eaten to satisfy, they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces, a much larger quantity than was at first set before our Lord to divide.

Miraculous work! But what is too hard for God? What is impossible to Omnipotence? Strange perverseness of the sons of men, that after such manifestations of Almighty power, they should incredulously doubt, or impiously distrust, the providence and fatherly care of this sovereign, this infinitely gracious Being, into whose hands the Father hath delivered this world, and all its concerns! We are his by right of creation and redemption, and him we are bound to serve; and blessed are they who have so kind a Master, so compassionate a Father.

The literal account of this miracle, as recorded by the several Evangelists, is very plain, as well as circumstantial; and it is remarkable, that the circumstances of the place and time tended to magnify its greatness. The place was a desert, where there was no possibility of procuring any sustenance. Had he done this mighty work in any of the towns or villages round about, the pharisees in those days, and the infidels of ours, might have objected, that he had received secretly

some supplies; but this, in the present case, was impossible. The time was the evening; the people had been all the day fasting, and consequently were ready for their meal; had it been done in the morning, they might have said, either that the people had been just refreshed, or were not hungry; consequently, the miracle not great. But the time and place wholly removed all objections of this kind, and proved, beyond the possibility of doubt, that God can furnish a table in the wilderness.

We should learn from this great miracle to remember, That it is this Lord who every year blesses mankind with plentiful supplies of every thing necessary; it is this Lord who, agreeably to the emphatical words of David, "visiteth the earth, and blesseth it; who maketh it very plenteous; who watereth her furrows, and sendeth rain into the little vallies thereof; who maketh it soft with showers, and blesseth the increase of it; who crowneth the year with his goodness, while his clouds drop fatness; making the valleys stand so thick with corn, that they laugh and sing:" whose beneficent hand and liberal bounty call for all their praise, and claim all their thankfulness. For however inattentively we may behold this mighty work of Omnipotence, it is no less a miracle, that our Lord should every day support and feed the whole race of mankind, and all the creatures of his hand, than that Christ should feed five thousand with five loaves and two fishes; for what proportion does five thousand bear to those myriads of men, who are daily fed from the fruits of the earth? the increase of which is equally a miracle with the increase of the bread and loaves, by the blessing of Jesus! How small is the seed sown, when compared with the produce! It is carried out in handsful, and brought home in sheaves: and who can tell by what secret operations this wonderful effect is wrought? Nature is equally wonderful in all her works, as in this particular: and the Divinity, to an attentive observer, equally visible in these regular productions, as in miraculous supplies afforded; equally seen in the wine produced from the moisture of the earth, filtrated through the branches of the vine, as in that instantaneously made from water at the marriage in Cana; equally seen in the corn gradually ripened and made into bread for the support of mankind, as in the bread miraculously blessed to the support of the five thousand. But the constant repetition of these surprising operations renders them common, and, being common, they are less observed. Our heavenly Father, therefore, condescends to deviate from the common order of things to rouse and awaken our attention. But if we are dead and utterly inattentive to the work of God in nature, where we see the divine magnificence and bounty so visibly, so richly displayed, there is too

much reason to fear, that outward miracles will not now awaken us. We are, however, apt to deceive ourselves in this respect, and are often led to conclude, that had we been present at so stupendous a miracle, as that we are contemplating, we should have adored the divine hand that wrought it, and never have forsaken the blessed Jesus. But, alas! if all the displays of God's divine power in the works of creation, if all the evidences of his omnipotence, if the continual supplies of his bounty, and the most legible characters of his adorable love, written upon all the creatures of his hand, will not elevate our grateful and rejoicing hearts to him, there is great reason to fear, that had we seen the blessed Jesus feed five thousand men with five barley-loaves and two small fishes, had we ourselves been partakers of this miraculous banquet, we should have acted like many who really enjoyed these privileges, and have turned away at some of his hard sayings, "and walked no more with him."

But to return. The people, when they had seen the Saviour of the world perform so stupendous a miracle, were astonished above measure; and in the height of their transport, purposed to take Jesus by force, and make him a king, concluding, that he must then assume the title of the Messiah, whose coming they had so long earnestly expected, and under whose reign they expected all kinds of temporal felicities.

But our Lord, well knowing the intentions of the multitude and the inclinations of his disciples to second them, ordered the latter to repair immediately to their boat, and sail for Bethsaida, while he sent away the multitude. They would, it seems, gladly have detained the people, with whom they fully agreed in sentiments; and even lingered till he constrained them to get into the boat; so fully were they still possessed, that their Master was to take the reins of government, and become a powerful prince over the house of Jacob.

The people suffered the disciples to depart without the least remorse, as they saw that Jesus did not go with them.

Perhaps they imagined he was sending them away to provide such things as they had need of. Nor did they refuse to disperse, when he commanded them, purposing to return in the morning, as we find they actually did.

Having thus sent the disciples and the multitude away, Jesus repaired himself to the summit of a mountain, spending the evening in heavenly contemplations and ardent prayers to his Almighty Father.

But the disciples, meeting with a contrary wind, could not continue their course to Bethsaida, which lay about two leagues to the northward of the desert mountain, where the multitude were miraculously fed. They, however, did all in their power

to land as near that city as possible, but were tossed up and down all night by the tempest: so that at the conclusion of the fourth watch, or five o'clock in the morning, they were not above a league from the shore.

Their divine Master beheld, from the mountain, their distressed situation; but they were ignorant of his presence, though he was now coming to their relief. From hence we should learn, when the stormy billows of affliction assault and seem ready to overwhelm us, not to despair of relief; for he who beholds every particular of our distress hath not "forgotten to be gracious," but will surely come to our assistance, and work our deliverance in a manner altogether unexpected. He often calms the storm of affliction that surrounds us, and commands the bellowing waves of distress to subside. Human wisdom, indeed, is often at a loss; it can discover no hopes of deliverance, nor see any way to escape: but the Almighty can easily effect the one, or point out the other.

Such was the state of the disciples; they were tossed by boisterous waves, and opposed in their course by the rapid current of the wind, so that all hopes of reaching the place intended were vanished: when, behold, their heavenly Master, to assist them in this distressful situation, comes to them walking on the foaming surface of the sea. Their Lord's approach filled them with astonishment: they took him for one of the apostate spirits, and shrieked for fear. Their terrors were, however, soon removed; their great and affectionate Master talked to them, with the sound of whose voice they were perfectly acquainted. "Be of good cheer," said the blessed Jesus, "it is I; be not afraid."

Peter, a man of warm and forward temper, beholding Jesus walking on the sea, was exceedingly amazed, and conceived the strange desire of being enabled to perform so wonderful an action.

Accordingly, without the least reflection, he immediately begged, that his Master would bid him come to him on the water. He did not doubt but that Jesus would gratify his request, as it sufficiently intimated that he would readily undertake any thing, however difficult, at the command of his Saviour. But it appeared, that his faith was too weak to support him to that height of obedience to which he would have willingly soared. To convince this forward disciple of the weakness of his faith, and render him more diffident of his own strength, our blessed Saviour granted Peter his request. He ordered him to come to him upon the water.

Peter joyfully obeyed his divine Master; he left the boat, and walked on the surface of the sea. But the wind increasing, made a dreadful noise, and the boisterous waves at the same

time threatened every moment to overwhelm him. His faith now staggered, his presence of mind forsook him; he forgot that his Saviour was at hand; and in proportion as his faith decreased, the waters yielded, and he sunk. In this extremity he looked around for his Master; and on the very brink of being swallowed up, cried, "Lord, save me!" His cry was not disregarded by his compassionate Saviour; "he stretched forth his hand and caught him, and said unto him, O thou, of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

Peter was convinced before he left the ship, that it was Jesus who was coming to them on the water; nor did he even doubt it when he was sinking, because he then implored his assistance. But when he found the storm increase, and the billows rage more horribly than before, his fears suggested, that either his Master would be unable or unwilling to support him amidst the frightful blasts of the tempest.

His fears were therefore both unreasonable and culpable: unreasonable, because the same power, that had enabled him to walk on the surface of the deep, was abundantly sufficient to support him there, notwithstanding all the horrors of the storm; culpable, because he considered his Master as unable to preserve him, or that he paid no regard to his promise; for Jesus had virtually promised him his assistance, when he granted this petition. This circumstance should teach us not to be presumptuous and self-sufficient; nor to rush on dangers, and fly in the face of opposition, unless there is a necessity for so doing. We should never refuse to undertake any action, however difficult, when the cause of Christ calls upon us; or abandon the paths of virtue from a fear of the resentment of the children of this world; but we should, at the same time, be careful not to go farther than necessity obliges us, lest, like Peter, we repent our own temerity.

This miracle alarmed the disciples, for though they had so very lately seen the miracle of the five loaves, they did not seem to have before formed a proper idea of his power; but being now persuaded that he could be no other than the expected Messiah, they "came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth, thou art the Son of God." *Matt.* xiv. 33.

Our Saviour seems to have confirmed this miracle, by working another: for the Evangelists tell us, that he had no sooner entered the ship, and hushed the horrors of the storm, than they arrived at the place whither they were going. "Then they willingly received him into the ship; and immediately the ship was at the land, whither they went." *John*, vi. 21.

When our Lord disembarked, the inhabitants of the neighboring country ran to him, bringing with them all those that were sick, and they were all healed. It must be remembered,

that though Jesus ordinarily resided in the neighborhood of Capernaum, yet he had been absent ever since his visiting Nazareth, and therefore, it is natural to think, that the inhabitants, on his return, would not omit the opportunity of bringing their sick in such prodigious crowds, that it seems our blessed Saviour did not bestow particular attention on each of them; and this was the reason for their beseeching him, "that they might only touch the hem of his garment; and as many as touched were made perfectly whole." *Matt.* xiv. 36.

The virtue of that power by which he wrought these things lay not in his garments, for then the soldiers, who seized them at his crucifixion, might have wrought the same miracles; but it was because Jesus wished it to be so. It was now the acceptable time, the day of salvation, foretold by Isaiah, and Christ's power was sufficient to remove any distemper whatsoever.

It has been mentioned that our blessed Saviour, after miraculously feeding the people, ordered them to disperse, and retire to their places of abode.

The former command they obeyed, but instead of complying with the latter, they stayed in the neighborhood of the desert mountain; and observing that no boat had come hither, since the disciples left their Master, they concluded that Jesus still continued in that place, and had no design of leaving his attendants. Hence they were persuaded, that though Jesus had modestly declined the honor of being made a king, he would accept it the next day; especially as they might fancy his disciples were despatched to the other side, with no other intention than to prepare every thing necessary for that purpose. Hopes like these, animated them to continue in this solitary wilderness, and take up their lodgings in the caverns of the rocks and mountains, notwithstanding their difficulties were greatly increased by the raging of the storm.

But no sooner did the cheering rays of light appear, than the multitude left their retreat, and searched for Jesus in every part of the mountain, to the summit of which they had seen him retire. Finding their search in vain, they concluded that he must have departed for the other side, in some boat belonging to Tiberias, which had been forced by the storm to take shelter in a creek at the foot of the mountain. Accordingly, they repaired to Capernaum, where they found him in the synagogue, teaching the people; and could not help asking him with some surprise, "Rabbi, when camest thou hither?" *John*, vi. 25.

To this question our Lord replied, that they did not seek him because they were convinced by his miracles of the truth of his mission, but because they hoped to be continually fed in

the same miraculous manner as before. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled." These are the views which induce you to follow me; but ye are entirely mistaken; for happiness does not consist in the meat that perisheth, nor is it that sort of meat you must expect to receive from the Messiah. Mere animal foods, which please and delight the body only, are not the gifts he came down from heaven to bestow; it is the meat that endureth to everlasting life, divine knowledge and grace, which, by invigorating all the faculties of the soul, make it at once incorruptible and immortal: neither ought ye to follow the Son of man with any intention to obtain the meat that perisheth; but in the hope of being rewarded with the meat that endureth to everlasting life. "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed." *John*, vi. 27.

The Jews, who were accustomed to the metaphors of meat and drink, as they are frequently found in the writings of their own prophets, to signify wisdom and knowledge, might easily have understood what our blessed Saviour meant by the meat "enduring to everlasting life." They, however, entirely mistook him; imagining that he spake of some delicious healthful animal food, which would render them immortal, and which was only to be procured under the government of their great Messiah. It is herefore no wonder that this exhortation should so greatly affect them, that they asked him what they should do to erect the Messiah's kingdom, and obtain that excellent meat which he said God had authorized him to give to his followers?

The Jews were elated with the prospect of the mighty empire the promised Messiah was to establish; and, doubtlessly, expected that Jesus would have bidden them first to rise against the Romans, vindicate their own liberties, and then establish in every country, by the terror of fire and sword, the authority of that powerful prince so long expected by the Jewish nation. To convince them, therefore, of their mistake, and inform them what God really required of them, towards erecting the Messiah's kingdom, Jesus told them, that they should believe on the person sent to them from the God of Jacob; but at this answer they were exceedingly offended. They were persuaded that he could not be the Messiah promised in the law and the prophets, who took no care to erect a temporal kingdom. And some of them, more audacious than the rest, had the confidence to tell him, that since he assumed the character of the Messiah, and required them to believe in him as such, it was necessary that he should perform greater miracles than either Moses or any of the old prophets, if he was desirous of convincing them, that they ought

to believe him the long-promised Messiah. "They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? What dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat." *John*, vi. 30.

By extolling the miracle of the manna, by calling it bread from heaven, and by insinuating that this miracle was wrought by Moses, the Jews endeavored to deprecate both Christ's mission and his miracle of the loaves. They considered this miracle as a single meal of terrestrial food, at which but a few thousands had been fed; whereas, Moses had supported the whole Jewish nation, during the space of forty years, in the wilderness, by celestial food. To this objection the blessed Jesus replied, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." *John*, vi. 32, 33. Moses did not give you the manna that fell around the camp in the wilderness, nor did it descend from heaven; it was formed in the regions of the air, by the omnipotent hand of the God of Jacob. But, by the miracle of the loaves, my heavenly Father hath typified the true, the spiritual, the heavenly bread, which he himself giveth to the sons of men, and of which the manna was only a symbolical representation: the food that sustained the Israelites in the wilderness was sufficient only for a single nation; but this for all the children of men.

Many of the Jews, who listened with pleasure to his doctrine, having heard him describe the properties of the celestial bread, were animated with an earnest desire of being always fed with it. "Lord," said they, "evermore give us this bread;" to which the blessed Jesus answered, "I am the bread of life. He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." *John*, vi. 35.

Having made this answer to those who listened attentively to his doctrine, he turned himself to such as had heard him with prejudice, and took every advantage of wresting his words. You ask me, says he, to show you a sign, that ye may see and believe me to be the true Messiah. Surely you have seen it: you have seen my character and mission in the many miracles I have performed: miracles abundantly sufficient to convince you that I am really the Messiah so often promised by the ancient prophets, so long expected by the whole Jewish nation. But, notwithstanding all these proofs, your hearts are still burdened; you expect a temporal prince, who shall raise the Jewish kingdom above all the empires of the earth: and because I do not affect the authority and pomp of an earthly monarch, you reject me as an impostor. Your infidelity, therefore, does not proceed

from want of evidence, as you vainly pretend, but from the perverseness of your own dispositions, which may perhaps in time be overcome; for all those that the Father hath given me, however obstinate they may be for a season, will at last believe on the Son of God. Nor will I ever reject any that come to me, however low their circumstances may be, however vile they may appear in their own eyes, or however greatly their violence against my doctrines may have been exerted. I came down from heaven not to act according to the common method of human passions, which excite men to return evil for evil, but to bear with them; to try all possible means to bring them to repentance; and lead them in the straight paths of virtue, which terminate at the mansions of the heavenly Canaan.

It is the fixed will of my Father, to bestow eternal life on all who truly believe in me; and, therefore, I will raise them up at the last day.

As the prospect of the greatest part of the Jews extended no farther than temporal privileges and advantages, it is no wonder that they were offended at this doctrine; especially at his affirming that he was the bread of life, and that he came down from heaven. Was not this man, said they, born into the world like other mortals? And are we not acquainted with his parents? How, then, can he pretend to come down from heaven?

But these degrading thoughts could not escape the censure of him to whom nothing is a secret. You need not, said the blessed Jesus, object to my birth, and the meanness of my relations, nor consider them as inconsistent with my heavenly extraction. For, while you believe your teachers, who have so shamefully corrupted the oracles of Omnipotence, and filled your minds with the vain expectation of a temporal kingdom, you cannot believe on me. No man can believe on the Son of God, unless he be persuaded by the Father. You need not be surprised at this; for however ye may imagine that all men, at the appearance of the Messiah, will flock to him with great cheerfulness, and become the willing subjects of his kingdom, without any extraordinary means or persuasion, the prophets plainly foretold the contrary: for they promise that men shall enjoy the teaching of the Father, in a far more eminent manner during the Messiah's kingdom, than under any preceding dispensation; consequently, persuasion, and the most earnest persuasion too, is necessary. You are not to understand that by being taught of God, you are to see, with your bodily eyes, the invisible Jehovah, because that privilege is confined to the Son alone; but that you are to be taught by the Spirit of God whatever is requisite for your eternal interest in and by me, who am the way, the truth, and the life.

Having thus asserted the dignity of his mission, and demonstrated that it really belonged to him, the blessed Jesus examined the comparison between himself, considered as the bread from heaven, and the manna which Moses provided for their fathers in the wilderness. The manna, said he, which your fathers ate in the desert, could not preserve them from temporal death; but the bread which came down from heaven will render men immortal. "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever. And the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." *John*, vi. 51.

Though the divine teacher, on this occasion, made use of no other expressions than what the Jews had been accustomed to interpret in a figurative sense; yet, so great was their perverseness, that they considered them as spoken literally, and were astonished beyond measure at what he could mean, by saying he would give them "his flesh to eat." Jesus, however, knowing how unreasonable his hearers were, did not proceed to explain himself more particularly at this time. But persisting in the same figurative manner of expression, here peated and affirmed more earnestly, what he had before asserted. Except, said he, ye be entirely united to me, by a hearty practice and belief of my doctrine, partake of the merit of that sacrifice that I shall offer for the sins of the world, continue in the communion of my religion, and receive spiritual nourishment, by the continual participation of those means of grace which I shall purchase for you by my death, ye can never enter the happy mansions of eternity. "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood drink indeed." *John*, vi. 54, 55.

This is the bread which came down from heaven; a kind of bread infinitely superior to that of manna, both in its nature and efficacy. It is different in its nature from manna, because it is not to be eaten, as your fathers ate that food in the wilderness; "they ate manna and are dead." It is different in its effect, because he that "eateth of this bread shall live for ever."

These particulars Jesus spake in the hearing of all the people, who attended the public worship in the synagogue of Capernaum; and though most of the metaphors were very easy to be understood, yet they could not comprehend what he meant, by "eating his flesh, and drinking his blood:" a thing not only prohibited by the laws of Moses, but also repugnant to the customs of all civilized nations.

Many, therefore, who had followed him, considered it as inconsistent, and absolutely absurd. But Jesus answered, Are

you offended because I told you my flesh is bread; that it came down from heaven; and that you must, in order to have eternal life, eat my flesh, and drink my blood? But what if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up bodily into heaven, from whence he was sent by his heavenly Father? You will then surely be persuaded that I really came from heaven: and at the same time be convinced that you cannot eat my flesh in a corporeal manner.

I never meant that you should understand the expression literally; my flesh in that case would be of no advantage to the children of men. The metaphor was only used to indicate that you must believe in the doctrines which I preach; for to reveal these, I took upon me the veil of flesh, and assumed the nature of man. It is, therefore, more properly my Spirit that confers this life on the human race, and renders them immortal.

My doctrine may, perhaps, be ineffectual to some of you, because ye are desirous of perverting it, and from thence to form a pretence for forsaking me. I well know the secret recesses of every heart; and therefore told you, that no man can believe on me, except it was given him of my Father.

The self-sufficient, self-righteous Jews were so offended at this discourse, that many of them, who had hitherto been our Saviour's disciples, went out of the synagogue, and never came more to hear him. They found that all their pleasing views of worldly grandeur, and an extensive kingdom, could have nothing more than an ideal foundation, if they acknowledged Jesus to be the Messiah. And as they were unwilling to abandon all their favorite hopes of power, they refused to own him for the great Redeemer of Israel they had so long expected.

When the Jews were departed, Jesus turned himself to his disciples, and, with a look of ineffable sweetness, said to them, "Will ye go away?" To this Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life! And we believe and are sure, that thou art that Christ the Son of the living God." *John*, vi. 68, 69.

Peter, in this reply, alluded to our Lord's declaration of himself, in which he says, that he was the bread of life, founding his faith in him as the Messiah.

But Jesus, to convince him that he was not ignorant of the most secret thoughts of the heart, nor afraid that his enemies should be spectators of his most retired actions, told him, that one of the twelve was a wicked man, and would be guilty of the vilest action. The prediction of Jesus was punctually verified, when Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve chosen disciples, basely betrayed his great Lord and Master.

CHAPTER XV.

Pharisaical superstition severely reprimanded.—The great Redeemer continues to display his power and benevolence in the relief of several objects of affliction.—Guards his disciples against the prevailing errors and fallacies of the Scribes and Pharisees.—Proceeds on the work of his heavenly Father.

THE season of the grand passover approaching, Jesus went up to Jerusalem, to attend that solemnity. But the Jews being offended at his discourse in the synagogue of Capernaum, made an attempt upon his life. Our Lord, therefore, finding it impossible to remain in Jerusalem in safety, departed from that city, and retired into Galilee.

The pharisees were sensible they could not perpetrate their malicious designs upon him on that occasion; they therefore followed him, hoping to find something by which they might accuse him; and at length ventured to attack him for permitting his disciples to eat with unwashed hands, because, in so doing, they transgressed the tradition of the elders.

Moses had, indeed, required external cleanliness as a part of their religion; but it was only to signify how careful the servants of the Almighty should be to purify themselves from all uncleanness, both of flesh and spirit. These ceremonial institutions were, in process of time, prodigiously multiplied, and the pharisees, who pretended to observe every tittle of the law, considered it as a notorious offence to eat bread with unwashed hands, though at the same time they suffered the more weighty precepts of the law to be neglected and forgotten.

To expose the absurdity of such superstitious customs, our Saviour applied to them the words of the prophet Isaiah, "This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." Adding, that all their worship was vain, and displeasing to the Almighty, while they praised themselves, and imposed upon others the frivolous precepts of man's invention, and at the same time neglected the eternal rules of righteousness: and to remove all objections that might he brought against this imputation of gross profaneness in the pharisees, he supported it by a very remarkable instance.

God, said the Saviour of the world, hath commanded children to honor their parents, and to maintain them, when reduced to poverty, by sickness, age, or misfortunes, promising life to such as obey this precept, and threatening death to those who

disregard it. But notwithstanding the peremptory commandment of Omnipotence, you teach, that it is a more sacred duty to enrich the temple than to nourish their parents, reduced to the utmost necessity; pretending that what is offered to the great Parent of the universe is much better bestowed than what is given to the support of our earthly parents; making the interest of God absolutely different from that of his creatures. Nay, ye teach, that it is no breach of the commandment for a man to suffer his parents to perish, provided he has given what ought to nourish them, to the temple of Jerusalem. Thus have ye concealed, under the cloak of piety, the most horrid, the most unnatural crime any person can commit.

Having thus reproved the pharisees, he called the multitude to him, and desired them to reflect on the absurdity of the precepts inculcated by the scribes. These hypocrites, said he, solicitous about trifles, neglect the great duties of morality, which are of eternal obligation. They shudder with horror at unwashed hands, but are perfectly easy under the guilt of a polluted conscience, though they must be sensible, that "not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man: but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." *Matt.* xv. 11.

The haughty pharisees were highly offended at his speaking in a degrading manner of their traditions. And the apostles, who would gladly have reconciled their Master and the pharisees, insinuated to Jesus that he ought to have acted in another manner. To which our Saviour answered, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." *Matt.* xv. 13. As if he had said, you have not cause to fear their anger, as both they and their doctrine shall perish together, for neither of them came from God. Adding, "Let them alone: they be blind, leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." *Matt.* xv. 14.

His disciples, not fully comprehending this doctrine, desired their Master to explain it. This our Saviour complied with, and showed them that meats being of a corporeal nature, could not defile the mind of man, or render him polluted in the sight of the Almighty, unless they are used to excess, or in opposition to the commandment of God; and even then the pollution arose from the man, and not from the meat. But, on the contrary, that which proceedeth out of the mouth of a man comes from his heart, and really polluteth his mind.

These doctrines of truth could not fail of irritating the pharisees, as they tended to strip them of the mask with which they concealed their deformity, and rendered themselves so venerable in the eyes of the vulgar; and therefore their plots were levelled against his reputation and life.

Jesus, to avoid their malice, retired to the very borders of Palestine, to the coast of those two celebrated Gentile cities, Tyre and Sidon, proposing there to conceal himself for a time: but he could not be hid. It was as impossible for the divine "Son of righteousness" to be concealed where he came with his healing wings and message of peace, as it is for the sun in the firmament, when he riseth in all his glory, "as a bridegroom cometh out of his chamber, and as a giant rejoiceth to run his course." For a certain woman of Canaan, having heard of him, determined to implore his assistance. She was, indeed, one of the most abject sort of Gentiles, a Canaanite, one of that detested race with which the Jews would have no dealing, nor even conversation; but notwithstanding all these discouraging circumstances, she threw herself, as an humble petitioner, on the benevolent mercies of the Son of God. Strong necessity urged her on; and insuperable distress caused her to be importunate. Alas! unhappy parent! her only daughter, her beloved child, had an unclean spirit, "was grievously vexed with a devil."

When her case was so urgent, and her woes so poignant, who can wonder that she was so importunate, and would take no refusal from this divine person, who, she knew, was able to deliver her? Accordingly, she came; she fell at his feet; she besought him; she cried, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David, have mercy." I plead no merits; as a worthless suffering wretch, I entreat only the bowels of thy mercy; I entreat it, for I believe thee to be the Son of David, the promised Messiah, the much-desired Saviour of the world; have mercy on me, for the case of my child and her distresses are my own: "My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." *Matt.* xv. 22.

Is it not at the first view astonishing that such a petitioner should be rejected; and rejected by a bountiful and merciful Redeemer, who kindly invited all that were heavy laden to come to him; who promised never to cast out any that would come, and whose business it was "to go about doing good?"

We, however, find he answered this woman not a word: he did not, in appearance, take the least notice, either of her or her distress. But this silence did not intimidate her; she still cried, she still besought, she still importunately pressed her petition; so that the very disciples were moved with her cries, and became her advocates. They themselves, though Jews, besought their Master to dismiss this petitioner, to grant her request, and to send her away.

But Jesus soon silenced them, by an answer agreeable to their own prejudices. "I am not sent," said he, "but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." To this the disciples readily assented; and as they had an high opinion of the Jews' preroga-

tive, were so well satisfied with the answer, that we hear them pleading no more for this lost, this miserable Gentile.

But this soothed not her griefs; it was her own cause, and what is immediately our own concern animates us to the most zealous application. Somewhat encouraged that she was the subject of discourse between our Lord and his disciples, she ventured to approach the Saviour of the world, though she well knew that the law actually forbade such an intercourse; yet she came, she worshipped "this Son of David," she confessed again his divinity, and prayed, saying, "Lord, help me!"

The compassionate Saviour now condescended to speak to her, but with words seemingly sufficient to have discouraged every farther attempt; nay, to have filled her with bitter dislike to his person, though she had conceived such high and noble notions of his mercy and favor: "It is not meet," said he, "to take the children's bread and to cast it to the dogs." *Matt.* xv. 26. It is not justice to deprive the Jews, who are the children of the covenant, the descendants of Abraham, of any part of those blessings which I came into the world to bestow, especially to you, who are aliens and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel.

This answer, though severe, could not shake her humility nor overcome her patience; she meekly answered, "Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." *Matt.* xv. 27. Let me enjoy that kindness which the dogs of any family are not denied; from the plenty of miraculous cures, which thou bestowest on the Jews, drop this one to me, who am a poor distressed heathen: for they will suffer no greater loss by it, than the children of a family do by the crumbs which are cast to the dogs.

Our Lord having put the woman's faith to a very severe trial, and well knowing that she possessed a just notion of his power and goodness, as well as of her own unworthiness, wrought with pleasure the cure she solicited in behalf of her daughter; and, at the same time, gave her faith the praise it so justly deserved. "Oh! woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." *Matt.* xv. 28.

After performing this miracle, Jesus returned to the Sea of Galilee, through the region of Decapolis. In this country a man was brought to him who was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech. Objects in distress were always treated with benevolence by the holy Jesus: but as the people now thronged about him, in expectation that he would soon establish his kingdom, he thought proper to take the man, with his relations, aside from the multitude; after which he put his fingers in his ears, and touched his tongue, that the deaf man, who could

not be instructed by language, might know from whence all his benefits flowed. He then "looked up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And he charged them that they should tell no man." *Mark*, vii. 34, 35, 36.

But, notwithstanding they were enjoined to secrecy, the man, or his relations, published it in every part of the country, doubtless thinking they could not be too lavish in the praises of so great a benefactor: especially as the modesty with which he had performed the cure abundantly demonstrated that his sole view was the benefit of the human race.

This rumor gathered the multitude round him in Decapolis; for the fame of his miracles was extended to every corner of the country. He, therefore, to avoid the prodigious crowds of people, retired into a desert mountain, near the Sea of Galilee. But the solitary retreats of the wilderness were unable to conceal this beneficent Saviour of the human race. They soon discovered his retreat, and brought to him from all quarters, the sick, the lame, the dumb, the blind, and the maimed. The sight of so many objects in distress so excited the compassion of the Son of God, that he graciously released them from all their complaints. Miracles like these, could not fail of astonishing the spectators, especially those performed upon the dumb; for it must be remembered, that he not only conferred on those the faculty of hearing, and pronouncing articulate sounds, but conveyed at once into their minds the whole language of their country; they were instantly acquainted with all the words it contained, their signification, their powers, and their uses; at the same time they enjoyed the habit of speaking it both fluently and copiously. This was surely enough to demonstrate to the most stupid, that such works could have been effected by nothing less than infinite power. "The multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see; and they glorified the God of Israel." *Matt.* xv. 31.

The various works performed by the blessed Redeemer detained the multitude in the desert with him three days, during which time they consumed all the provisions they had brought into this solitary place. But Jesus would not send them away fasting, lest any who had followed him so far from their habitations should faint in their return. Accordingly he again exerted his almighty power, to feed the multitude a second time in the wilderness.

It is highly worthy of our notice, the great wisdom of our blessed Saviour, in choosing to spend so great a part of the time he executed his public ministry, in the wilderness, and in

solitary places. He did not seek the applauses of men, but the eternal salvation of their souls; and therefore often delivered his doctrines in the silent retreats thereof: in consequence of which he was followed by such only as had dispositions adapted for profiting by his instructions. It could not be supposed that many of different dispositions would accompany him into solitudes, where they were to sustain the incoveniences of hunger for several days successively, and be at the same time exposed to all the inclemencies of the weather. Those only who were desirous of instruction, could, therefore, be expetced to follow the blessed Jesus into those retired parts; and on those, doubtless, his doctrine distilled like dew, and like the small rain upon the tender herb. Happy mortals! who thus exchanged the shallow and frothy streams of folly, for the deep and salutary rivers of eternal wisdom; who left the noise and bustle of a covetous bigoted people, for the calm instructions of the Son of God; and exchanged the perishing bread of this world for the "bread of life, the bread that came down from heaven!"

After feeding the multitude miraculously, Jesus retired into a district, called Dalmanutha, a part of the territory of Magdala. Here he was visited by the pharisees, who, having heard that he had a second time fed the multitude miraculously, were fearful that the common people would acknowledge him for the Messiah: and therefore determined openly and publicly to confute his pretensions to that character.

In order to do this, they boldly demanded of him a sign from heaven: for it must be remembered, that the Jews expected the Messiah would make his first public appearance in the clouds of heaven, and in a glorious manner establish a temporal kingdom. This opinion was founded on the following prophecy of Daniel, which they understood literally: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away; and his kingdom, that which shall not be destroyed." *Daniel*, vii. 13, 14.

It is therefore evident, that the pharisees, by desiring Jesus to show them a sign from heaven, meant that he should demonstrate himself to be the Messiah, by coming in a visible and miraculous manner from heaven, and wresting with great pomp the sceptre of David from the hands of the Romans.

If the minds of the pharisees had been open to conviction, the proofs which Jesus was daily giving them would have been more than sufficient to establish the truth of his mission, and demonstrate that he was the long-expected Messiah.

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"But they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David. And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I should do unto you? They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened."—MATT. xx. 31—33.

But they were not desirous of being convinced; and to that alone, and not to want of evidence, or of capacity in themselves, it was owing, that they refused to acknowledge our Saviour to be the person foretold by the prophets. Their disposition was absolutely incorrigible; so that Jesus sighed deeply in his spirit, and declared that the sign they sought should never be given them: and that the only sign they were to expect was that of the prophet Jonas, or the miracle of his own resurrection: a sign indeed much greater than any shown by the ancient prophets; and consequently, a sign which demonstrated that Jesus was far superior to them all. "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas." *Matt.* xvi. 4.

Having thus reproved the impertinent curiosity of the pharisees, he departed, with his disciples, and entered into a ship; and as they sailed, he cautioned them to beware of the doctrine of the pharisees and sadducees, which he termed leaven, from its pernicious influence in filling the minds of men with pride, and other irregular passions: these hypocrites chiefly insisted on the observations of frivolous traditions, but neglected the true principles of piety, and hence filled the minds of their hearers with an high opinion of their own sanctity.

But the disciples having forgotten to take bread with them, understood that he intended to caution them against procuring it from the heathens or Samaritans. They were so weak, as not to think that their Master, who had fed some thousands of people with five loaves, was also capable of providing for them in their necessities.

On his landing at Bethsaida, they brought unto him a blind man, desiring that he would heal him: Jesus, accordingly, took the man by the hand, and led him out of the city, and having spit upon his eyes, and put his hands upon him, asked him if he saw aught? To which the man answered, "I see men as trees walking." A very good expression to convey an idea of the indistinctness of his vision. Jesus then put his hands again upon him, and he was restored to sight, "and saw every man clearly." It should be remembered that the people of Bethsaida had, by their ingratitude, impertinence, and infidelity, greatly displeased the Saviour of the world: and this, perhaps, was the reason why Jesus would not perform the cure in that city, but led the man out into the adjacent plain. The people had also, for a long time, been solicitous that he would take upon himself the character of the temporal Messiah; and therefore he chose to perform this miracle without the city, to prevent their farther importunity, so incompatible with the modesty and lowliness of our dear Lord and Master.

CHAPTER XVI.

The blessed Jesus delegates a special power to Peter, one of his Disciples.—Pronounces the final judgment of the world, and is afterwards transfigured upon the Mount.

Jesus having displayed his power and goodness in restoring the blind man to sight, departed from Bethsaida, and retired into the territory of Cæsarea Philippi, where, being desirous of proving, in some measure, the faith of the apostles, he asked them, saying, "Whom do men say, that I, the Son of Man, am?" In answer to this question, the disciples replied, "Some say, that thou art John the Baptist; some Elias; and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets." *Matt.* xvi. 14.

The people in general mistook the character of our Saviour, because he did not assume that outward pomp and grandeur with which they supposed the Messiah would be adorned. Jesus was therefore desirous of hearing what idea his disciples formed of his character, as they had long enjoyed the benefit of his doctrines and miracles; and accordingly asked them, What they themselves understood him to be? To this question Simon Peter replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Our Saviour acknowledged the title; telling Peter that God alone had revealed the secret to him. And in allusion to his surname, Peter, which signifies a rock, our Saviour promised that he should have a principal hand in establishing his kingdom; and that the Christian church should be erected on his labors, as on a solid foundation, never to be destroyed. "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." *Matt.* xvi. 18, 19.

Having delegated this power to Peter, our Saviour strictly forbade his disciples to tell any man that he was the Messiah; because it had been decreed in the courts of heaven that he should be rejected by the rulers of Israel as a false Christ, and suffer the pains of death. "Then charged he his disciples, that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ." *Matt.* xvi. 20. Circumstances which could not fail of giving his followers great offence, as they did not yet understand the true nature of his kingdom; and therefore he thought proper to let

every man form a judgment of his mission, from his doctrine and miracles.

The foregoing discourses had doubtless filled the apostles' minds with lofty imaginations, and therefore our Saviour thought proper to acquaint them with his sufferings, in order to check any fond expectation of temporal power. Peter, however, was greatly displeased to hear his Master talk of dying at Jerusalem, when he had just before acknowledged the title of Messiah Accordingly, he rebuked him for the expression, which he was so bold as to think unguarded. But Jesus, turning himself about, said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." *Matt.* xvi. 23.

Peter's conduct in this respect, arising from an immoderate attachment to sensual objects, our Saviour thought proper to declare publicly, that all who intended to share with him in the glory of the heavenly Canaan, must deny themselves; that is, they must be always ready to renounce every worldly pleasure, and even life itself, when the cause of religion required it: he also told them, that in this life they must expect to meet with troubles and disappointments; and, that whoever intended to be his disciple, must "take up his cross daily, and follow him."

Thus did the blessed Jesus fully explain to his disciples the true nature of his kingdom; and at the same time intimated, that though they had already undergone many afflictions, yet they must expect still more, and greater, which they must sustain with equal fortitude, following their Master in the footsteps of his afflictions. This duty, however hard, was absolutely necessary; because, by losing their temporal life, they would gain that which was eternal: "For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." *Luke*, xi. 24. "For what is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" *Matt.* xvi. 26.

To add to the weight of this argument, and to enforce the necessity of self-denial, our Saviour particularly declared, that a day was fixed for distributing rewards and punishments to all the human race; and that he himself was appointed by the Father as universal Judge; so that his enemies could not flatter themselves with the hope of escaping the punishments they deserved, nor his friends be afraid of losing their eternal reward. "Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me and my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." *Mark*, viii. 38.

To fortify the minds of his disciples, he informed them, that he would not appear to judge the world in his low and despised condition, but magnificently arrayed in both his own and his Father's glory; nor attended by twelve weak disciples, but surrounded by myriads of celestial spirits, with numberless hosts of mighty angels; nor should his rewards be the great offices and large possessions of a temporal kingdom, but the joys of immortality.

Let us now ruminate on the glory of the Judge, and the solemnity of the final judgment. He shall come in the majestic splendor of his glorified body, pompously arrayed with the inaccessible light wherein Jehovah resides, and which darting through and enlightening the infinite regions of space with its ineffable brightness, shall make even the sun to disappear. Dressed in this awful manner, the great Judge, attended by the whole celestial host, will "descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God," (1 *Thess.* iv. 16.) making heaven, earth, and hell to resound. The dead of all countries, and of all times, will hear the tremendous call. Hark! the living filled with joy, exult at the approach of Omnipotence; or, seized with inexpressible horror, send up the most piercing cries, and are all changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye! The dead press forth from their graves, and follow each other in close procession! Behold—but, ah! nothing can behold; nothing can bear his presence! the heavens depart like a scroll, rolling itself together! Every mountain, and every island is moved. The bond, the free, the rich, the great, captains and kings, to avoid the face of him that sitteth on the throne, the presence of the Lamb, rush beneath trembling mountains, and plunge into flaming rivers! but neither mountains nor flame will devour them, for they are raised immortal. Behold him then, for all must behold him! even his eye, whose unthinking hand drove his nails at Calvary; nor heaven nor earth exist, stars and sun are vanished, lest they should darken the procession! Once the crucifixion of Jesus, and now his glory, extinguishes the sun! Lo! hell, with what reluctance, comes forth for sentence! Lo! two worlds to be judged, and the third an assistant spectator! Behold! with what beauty, with what boldness, with what joy, some spring forward towards the judgment-seat. See, on the other hand, how amazed, how terrified the wicked appear! with what vehemence they wish the extinction of their being! fain would they fly, but cannot! impelled by a force, by strong necessity, they hasten to the place of judgment: as they advance, the sight of the tribunal from afar, strikes them with new terror. They approach in the deepest silence, and gather round the throne by thousands and thousands. In the

mean time, the angels having gathered together the good from the uttermost parts of the earth, fly around the numberless multitudes, chanting melodious songs and rejoicing that the day of general retribution is come, when vice shall be thrown from its high post of usurpation, and virtue be exalted to the pinnacle of honor; when the intricacies of providence shall be unrivalled, the perfections of the Almighty vindicated, the church of Christ purchased by his blood, cleared from her iniquitous members, and every thing which offendeth banished for ever.

Behold! the books are opened, silence proclaimed, and every individual filled with awful consciousness, that he, in particular, is observed by the Almighty; so that not one single person can be concealed by the immensity of the crowd. The Judge, who can be biassed by no bribes, softened by no subtle insinuations, imposed upon by no feigned excuses, needs no evidences, but distinguishes with an unerring certainty. They separate! They feel their judgment in them, and hasten to their proper places; the righteous on one hand of the throne, and the wicked on the other. Behold, how beautiful with the brightness of virtue, do the righteous stand at God's tribunal! their looks serene, and expressive of hopes full of immortality!

On the other hand, the wicked, confounded at the remembrance of their past lives, terrified with the bitter apprehensions of what is to come, hang down their dejected heads, and wish to hide themselves in the fathomless abyss! but all in vain; there is no escaping nor appealing from this tribunal.

Behold, with mercy shining in his countenance, the King invites the righteous to take possession of the kingdom prepared for them from the beginning of the world: but with frowns of anger drives the wicked to punishment which will have no end, no remission, no alleviation. What horror, what despair must seize these wretched souls, when they see hell gaping, hear the devils howling, and feel the unspeakable torment of an awakened conscience! Now they seek for death, but find it not; would gladly be righteous, but it is too late.

The happy land of promise, formed by the hand of the Almighty, large, beautiful, and pleasant, a proper habitation for his people, and long expected by them as their country, now appears. Here all the righteous are assembled, forming one vast, one happy society, even the kingdom, the city of God. Here Omnipotence manifests himself in a peculiar manner to his servants, wipes away all tears from off their faces, and adorns them with the beauties of immortality.

Here they drink a plenitude of joys from the crystal river, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb, and eat of the fruit of the tree of life. Here there shall be no

death, nor sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain.

Happy day! happy place! and happy people! imagination faints with the fatigue of stretching itself to comprehend the vast, the umeasurable thought!

As this doctrine of Christ being appointed the universal judge might appear incredible at that time on account of his humiliation he told them, that some who heard him speak should not taste of death, till they saw him coming in his kingdom. "Verily, I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." *Matt.* xvi. 28.

There are some here present that shall not die till they see a faint representation of the glory in which I shall come at the last day, and an eminent example of my power inflicted on the men of this sinful generation.

To verify which prediction, the disciples lived to see their Master coming in his kingdom, when they were witnesses of his transfiguration, resurrection, and ascension, and had the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit conferred upon them; lived to see Jerusalem, with the Jewish state destroyed; and the Gospel propagated through the greatest part of the then known world.

About eight days after this discourse, our blessed Saviour being with the multitude in the country of Cæsarea Philippi, left them in the plain, and, accompanied with Peter, James, and John, ascended an exceedingly high mountain.

In this solitude, while Jesus was praying with these three disciples, he was transfigured; his face became radiant and dazzling, for it shone like the sun in his meridian clearness. At the same time his garment acquired a snowy whiteness, far beyond any thing human art could produce; a whiteness bright as the light, and sweetly refulgent, but in a degree inferior to the radiance of his countenance.

Thus, as it were, for an instant, the Son of God, during his state of humiliation, suffered the glory of his divinity to shine through the veil of human nature, with which it was covered; and to heighten the grandeur and solemnity of the scene, Moses, the great lawgiver of Israel, and Elijah, a zealous defender of the laws, appeared in the beauties of immortality, the robes in which the inhabitants of the heavenly Canaan are adorned. The disciples, it seems, did not see the beginning of this transfiguration; happening to fall asleep at the time of prayer, they lost that pleasure, together with a great part of the conversation which these two prophets held with the only begotten Son of God.

They however understood that the subject was his meritorious sufferings and death, by which he was to redeem the world; a subject that had, a few days before, given great offence to the disciples, particularly to Peter. At beholding the illustrious sight, the disciples were greatly amazed; but the forwardness of Peter's disposition prompting him to say something, he uttered he knew not what: "Master," said he, "it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." *Mark*, ix. 5.

This disciple imagined that Jesus had now assumed his proper dignity; that Elias was come according to Malachi's prediction, and the Messiah's kingdom was at length begun.

Accordingly, he thought it was necessary to provide some accommodation for his Master and his august assistants, intending, perhaps, to bring the rest of the disciples, with the multitude, from the plain below, to behold his matchless glory. This he thought, was much better for his Master, than to be put to death at Jerusalem, concerning which Jesus had been talking with the messengers from heaven, and the design of which Peter could not comprehend.

But "while he yet spake, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him." *Matt.* xvii. 5.

When the three disciples heard the voice, which, like the roaring thunder burst from the cloud, and was such as mortals were unaccustomed to hear, they fell on their faces, and continued in that posture till Jesus approached, raised them up, and dispelled their fears, saying unto them, "Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only." *Matt.* xvii. 7, 8.

Jesus having continued all night, with his three disciples on the mountain, returned to the plain early in the morning charging them to conceal what they had seen, till after he was risen from the dead. He well knew that the world, and even his own disciples, were not yet able to comprehend the design of his transfiguration: and that if it had been published before his resurrection, it might have appeared incredible: because nothing but afflictions and persecutions had hitherto attended him. "He was truly a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

But the doctrine of the resurrection, to which the transfiguration alluded, was what the disciples were utterly unable to understand. They had never learnt that the Messiah was to die; far less, that he was to be raised from the dead. They were, on the contrary, persuaded that he was to abide for ever; and that his kingdom was to have no end. They were also

greatly surprised at the sudden departure of Elias, and could not comprehend what the Scribes meant by affirming that he must appear before the Messiah erects his empire. They, therefore, after long debating among themselves, asked their Master, "Why say the scribes, that Elias must first come?" To which Jesus answered, "that Elias should truly come first, according to the prediction of Malachi, and restore all things:" but at the same time, he assured them, that Elias was already come, and described the treatment he had met with from that stiff-necked people; giving them to understand that he spake of John the Baptist. "But I say unto you that Elias is come already and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed: likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist." *Matt.* xvii. 12, 13.

CHAPTER XVII.

Our Saviour relieves a Youth, tortured with a dumb Spirit.—Conforms cheerfully to the custom of the Country, by paying the tribute.—Reproves the pride of his Disciples, and delivers some excellent moral precepts.

When our Lord approached the descent of the mountain, accompanied by his three disciples, he saw a great multitude surrounding the nine who continued in the plain, and the scribes disputing with them. The people, seeing Jesus coming down from the mountain, ran to him, and saluted him with particular reverence. After which Jesus asked the scribes, what was the subject of their debate with his disciples? to which one of the multitude answered, "Master, I have brought unto thee my son which hath a dumb spirit: And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out, and they could not." *Mark*, ix. 17, 18.

This answer being made by one of the multitude, and not by the scribes, to whom the question was directed, indicates that they had been disputing with the disciples on their not being able to cure this afflicted youth: perhaps their making this unsuccessful attempt had given the scribes occasion to boast, that a devil was at length found, which neither they nor their Master were able to conquer. This seems to be indicated by the manner in which our Saviour addressed himself to these arrogant

rulers. "Oh, faithless generation," says he, "how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?" Will no miracles ever be able to convince you? Must I always bear with your infidelity? You have surely seen sufficient demonstration of my power, notwithstanding ye still discover the most criminal infidelity. After speaking in this manner to the scribes, he turned himself to the father of the young man, and said, "bring thy son hither." But no sooner was he brought in sight of his deliverer, than the evil spirit attacked him as it were, with redoubled fury; "the spirit tare him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed foaming." *Mark*, ix. 20.

Jesus could easily have prevented this attack: but he permitted it, that the minds of the spectators might be impressed with a more lively idea of this youth's distress. And for the same reason it was, that he asked the father how long he had been in this deplorable condition? To which the afflicted parent answered, "Of a child." And oft-times it hath cast him into the fire, and into the water to destroy him; but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us." *Mark*, ix. 21, 22.

The inability of our Lord's disciples to cast out this spirit had greatly discouraged the afflicted father: and the exquisite torture of his son, and the remembrance of its long continuance, so dispirited him, that he began to fear this possession was even too great for the power of Jesus himself, as the scribes had before affirmed; and therefore could not help expressing his doubts and fears. But Jesus, to make him sensible of his mistake, said to him, "if thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." On which the father cried out with tears, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." The vehement manner in which he spake causing the crowd to gather from every quarter, "Jesus rebuked the foul spirit;" saying unto him, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, Come out of him, and enter no more into him." *Mark*, ix. 25.

No sooner was the powerful exit pronounced, than the spirit, with an hideous howling, and convulsing the suffering patient in the most deplorable manner, came out, leaving the youth senseless, and without motion: till Jesus, taking him by the hand, restored him to life, and delivered him perfectly recovered to his father.

The nine disciples, during this whole transaction, remained silent. They were doubtless mortified to think, that they had lost, by some fault of their own, the power of working miracles, lately conferred upon them by their Master; and for this reason were afraid to speak to him in the presence of the multitude. But when they came into the house, they desired Jesus to inform them, why they failed in their attempt to heal that re-

markable youth? To which Jesus answered, "Because of your unbelief," but to encourage them, he described the efficacy of the faith of miracles. "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove: and nothing shall be impossible unto you." *Matt.* xvii. 20. Nothing shall be too great for you to accomplish, when the glory of God, and the good of the church are concerned, provided you have a proper degree of faith; even yonder mountain, which bids defiance to the storm, and smiles at the attacks of its mingled horrors, shall, at your command, leave its firm basis, and remove to another place.

The expulsion of the dumb spirit seems to have astonished the disciples more than any other miracle they had seen their Master perform: so that our Saviour found it necessary to moderate their high admiration of his work, by again predicting his own death, and retiring for a time into the unfrequented parts of Galilee.

But they could not comprehend how the Messiah, who was to abide for ever, and was come to deliver others from the stroke of death, should himself fall by the hand of that universal destroyer. And because he spake of rising again the third day, they could not conceive the reason of his dying at all, and for his lying so short a time in the chambers of the grave.

Though they were alarmed at this declaration, they remembered that he had often inculcated this doctrine, and reprimanded Peter for being unwilling to hear it.

After a short tour through the desert part of Galilee, Jesus returned into Capernaum, the place of his general residence. Soon after his arrival, the tax-gatherers came to Peter, and asked him, whether his Master would pay the tribute? That disciple, it seems, had promised that Jesus would satisfy their demand; but, on a more mature consideration, feared to ask him concerning his paying taxes on any pretence whatever.

Jesus, was, however, no stranger to what had happened, and the fear of Peter to ask him; and therefore turned the discourse to this subject, by saying unto him, What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? Of their own children or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free; insinuating, that as he was himself the Son of the great King, to whom heaven, earth, and sea belong, he had no right to pay tribute to any monarch whatever, because he held nothing by a derived right.

Or, if we suppose this contribution was made for the service and reparation of the temple, he meant, that as he was himself the Son of that Omnipotent Being to whom the tribute was paid, he could have justly excused himself. But the blessed Jesus was always careful not to give offence; and therefore sent Peter to the lake with a line and hook, telling him, that in the mouth of the first fish that came up, he should find a piece of money equal to the sum demanded of them both. "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them, for me and thee." *Matt.* xvii. 27.

Our Lord took this extraordinary method of paying the tribute money in this manner, because the miracle was of such a kind as could not fail to demonstrate that he was the son of the Great Monarch worshipped in the temple, and who rules the universe. In the very manner, therefore, of paying this tribute, he showed Peter that he was free from all taxes; and at the same time, gave this useful lesson to his followers, that when their property is affected only in a small degree, it is better to recede a little from their just right than to offend their brethren, or disturb the state, by obstinately insisting on it.

Notwithstanding our blessed Saviour had lately foretold his own sufferings and death, and though their melancholy accounts had greatly afflicted the minds of his disciples, yet their grief was of no long continuance; for within a few days they forgot the predictions of their Master, and disputed with each other about the chief posts of honor and profit in the Messiah's kingdom. This debate was overheard by the blessed Jesus, though he did not mention it till after the tax-gatherers were retired, when he asked them, what they were disputing about on the way? This question rendered them all silent. They were fearful of discovering the cause that had given rise to the debate, as they knew it would draw on them a reprimand from their Master. Jesus, perceiving that they still continued silent, sat down, and ordered them all to stand around him, and attend to what he was going to deliver. If any man, said the Saviour of the world, is ambitious of being the greatest person in my kingdom, let him endeavor to obtain that dignity by preferring others in honor, and doing to them all the good offices in his power. "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all." *Mark*, ix. 35.

The disciples were now convinced that it was in vain to conceal the subject of the debate that had happened on the way; and accordingly they drew near to their Master, desiring him to decide a point which had often given occasion to disputes

"Who," said they, "is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? *Matt.* xviii. 1. Jesus, to check these foolish emulations in his disciples, called a little child unto him, and placed him in the midst, that they might consider him attentively, and said unto them, "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." *Matt.* xviii. 3. Unless ye be humbled by the power of divine grace, and brought to a due sense of the vanity of all earthly preferments, riches, and honors, and become meek and humble in spirit, ye shall be so far from becoming the greatest in my kingdom, that ye shall never enter its borders. But whosoever shall be satisfied with the station in which God has placed him, receive with meekness all the divine instructions, however contrary to his own inclinations, and prefer others to himself, that man is really the greatest in my kingdom. "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." *Matt.* xviii. 4.

Our Saviour, to demonstrate how truly acceptable the beauty of the grace of humility is to the Almighty, took the child in his arms, declaring, that whoever humbled themselves, like a little child, and showed kindness to their fellow-creatures, should have the same kindness showed them in the great day of account, especially if they performed these worthy actions in obedience to his commands.

It appears from circumstances, that James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were principally concerned in this debate, for we find that John endeavored to divert it, by telling his Master, that they had seen one casting out devils in his name, and had forbidden him, because he did not join himself to their company. To which Jesus replied, that they should not have forbidden him, since he must have entertained very high notions of their Master's power, at seeing the devils leave the bodies of men, on mentioning the name of Jesus. "Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me." *Mark*, ix. 39.

You should, added the blessed Jesus, consider that every one who does not persecute us is a friend: and that the ejection of devils in my name will advance my doctrine, and promote my cause, even though the exorcist, and the devils themselves, should design the contrary. He also told his disciples, that the least degree of respect showed him by any one, even though it should be no more than the giving a cup of cold water to his thirsty disciples, was acceptable to him, and should not fail of meeting with an adequate reward. "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink, in my name, because ye belong to

Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." *Mark*, ix. 41.

But, on the other hand, the least discouragement given to his disciples in the propagation of the Gospel, come from what quarter it will, shall be punished with the greatest severity. "And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea." *Mark*. ix. 42.

From this saying, Jesus inferred, that it was more advantageous to deny ourselves the highest enjoyments of this world and to part with every thing, however precious, represented by a hand, a foot, or an eye, than by these to cause the weakest of his friends to stumble. And as the disciples were appointed to sow the seeds of virtue and religion in the world, or, according to the metaphor, to salt the people for an offering to heaven, in allusion to sacrifices being salted at the temple, Jesus exhorted them to mortify themselves, that they might appear worthy of so high an office as that of salting mankind for the altar of heaven; for as they were to be the salt of the earth, it was requisite they should themselves be filled with the spiritual salt of all the graces, and particularly the holy salt of love and peace, that they might as far as possible, be free from the rottenness of ambition, pride, contention, and every evil work.

Pride is the source of numberless sins; and therefore the blessed Jesus cautioned his disciples, in the most solemn manner, to beware of that vice; assuring them, that the meanest child is an object of the care of Providence; and "that their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." Our blessed Saviour did not mean by this expression, that every man who practises the duties of religion has a particular guardian angel assigned him; but as all angels are sent as ministering spirits, they may be called his angels.

To show the concern of his Almighty Father for the least of his reasonable creatures, and the great value he sets upon the souls of the human race, our Saviour told them, that he not only gave his highest angel charge concerning them, but had also sent his only begotten Son to seek and to save that which was lost; and would share in the joy which the heavenly beings are filled with on their recovery. "How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." *Matt.* xviii. 12, 13, 14.

Having thus addressed the offending party, he turned himself towards his disciples, and gave them instructions with regard to the offended. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." *Matt.* xviii. 15, 16, 17.

Try every measure to reclaim thy brother, and in order to this represent his fault to him privately. If this rebuke has the desired effect, thou hast brought him back to the paths which lead to happiness; but, if this gentle method fail, two or more grave persons should join in the rebuke, that he may be convinced of the injury he has done thee. If he still remain obstinate, tell his offence to the church, whose sentence will sufficiently show that thou hast done thy duty, and that he alone is to blame. But if he is so hardened as not to be affected by the censure of the church, he is from thenceforth to be treated as the pharisees treat the heathens and publicans: namely, as an incorrigible sinner, whose company and conversation being contagious, ought to be shunned by all who have any love for virtue and religion.

Our Saviour now conferred the special power which he had confined to Peter on all his disciples. "Verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." *Matt.* xviii. 18. That is, ye have free power to preach the remission of sins through faith in the Gospel and repentance unto life, and such decree will remain valid in the court of heaven, though passed here below.

But, on the other hand, if the offending brother continues impenitent after all the methods above described are tried, his guilt is bound the faster upon him; because, by the precepts of the gospel, none but penitents can obtain pardon.

Our blessed Saviour also added, as an encouragement to good men, that if they continued earnest in their endeavors to bring sinners to repentance, and offered up their prayers to the Almighty for assistance, he would always grant their petitions, provided they were agreeable to the wise ends of his providence. "Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." *Matt.* xviii. 19 20.

Peter had before heard his Master speak of the doctrine of frequent forgiveness, and imagined that what he had now so strongly inculcated might prove dangerous to society; and therefore thought it his duty to offer his objections. "Lord," said he, "how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" *Matt.* xviii. 21. He thought it a strange doctrine which obliged him to forgive offences seven times repeated; but our blessed Saviour told him that he was very greatly mistaken: that he never intended to limit forgiveness to seven times, but that it ought to be extended even to seventy times seven.

This excellent moral precept he enforced by the parable of the two servants, debtors to one lord; in order to show the necessity of forgiving the greatest injuries in every case where the offending party is sensible of his fault, and promises amendment; because, on this condition alone, our heavenly Father will forgive our offences. "Therefore," said the blessed Jesus, "is the kingdom of heaven likened to a certain king, which would take account of his servants." God is the great king and sovereign of all creatures, and all are accountable to him, as servants to a master. He will reckon with all: and happy are they who live sensible of this important truth. When he had begun to reckon, one servant was brought unto him who owed him an immense debt, "ten thousand talents," a debt much greater than he was able to pay. His lord, therefore, commanded him, agreeable to the custom of those times, to be sold for a slave, and "his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made."

The servant, convinced of the justice of the sentence, and knowing he had nothing to hope for, but from the mercy and clemency of his lord, fell down in the most humble manner, and importunately besought him, saying, "Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." The Master, moved with compassion towards him, accepted of his humiliation: and to make his happiness complete, loosed him from the sentence inflicted, and freely forgave him the enormous debt: an obligation surely sufficient to have melted the hardest heart into gratitude towards his lord, and the tenderest sympathy towards any of his brethren in distress. But, alas! who is acquainted with the human heart? This very servant went out from the presence of his compassionate lord, and found one of his fellow-servants who owed him "an hundred pence:" a poor inconsiderable debt in comparison of what he himself owed his lord.

But behold the base inhumanity of this servant: he laid hands on the poor debtor, seizing him violently by the throat, and saying, "Pay me that thou owest." His fellow-servant fell down

at his feet, even just as he had before done at the feet of his lord, and besought him in the very same words he himself had so lately used, "Have patience with me and I will pay thee all." Such a similarity of circumstances, one would have thought, must have affected his stony heart, brought to remembrance his own late distress, and melted his soul into the like generous compassion which had flowed so sweetly from his lord to him. But his conduct was the very reverse: he would have no patience, he would show no pity: he went and cast the unhappy debtor into prison till he should pay the debt.

His fellow-servants, when they saw what was done, were exceedingly afflicted, and came and told their lord the whole transaction. Upon which he summoned the unmerciful servant to appear before him: and filled with indignation and abhorrence, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, how perverse is thy behaviour, how ungrateful and base thy proceedings: "I forgave thee all the debt," that enormous debt thou owedst me, "because thou desiredst me:" I was moved to clemency and compassion by thy entreaties and distress, and "shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee!" Shouldst thou not much rather, have forgiven him, who was thy fellow-servant, and owed thee so small a sum, when I, thy king, and lord had forgiven thee so immense a debt?

Having thus expostulated with him, his wrath was kindled, and he "delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him." "So likewise," added the Son of God, "shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." *Matt.* xviii. 34, 35. And surely this awful threatening ought to strike the minds of fierce and implacable men with terror. For whatever they may think, it will certainly, in its full extent, be inflicted upon all who refuse to obey the dictates of divine mercy, and forgive not only their fellow-servants, but every brother in Christ, who, through weakness or inadvertence, may have done them an injury either in person or property.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Our blessed Lord attends for the fourth time the celebration of the Passover at Jerusalem. Harangues the multitude at the solemn Feast of Tabernacles. Exempts the woman detected in adultery from the punishment annexed by the Jews to that crime. Escapes from the snares laid for him by the inveterate Scribes and Pharisees.

The great Redeemer, having promoted his Father's work in Galilee, departed into Judea, passing through the country beyond Jordan, that the Jews who inhabited these distant parts might enjoy the unspeakable benefits of his discourses and miracles. After sowing the seeds of eternal life, and publishing the glad tidings of salvation in those remote countries, he repaired to Jerusalem to celebrate the fourth passover; but the malignity of the scribes and pharisees was so great, that he stayed but a short time in the capital; and then returned into Galilee, where the multitude again resorted to him, and he again instructed them in the path that leads to everlasting life.

The feast of the tabernacles now drew on, at which all the males of the Jewish nation, capable of travelling, repaired to Jerusalem, and dwelt in the tabernacles or booths made of the boughs of trees, in commemoration of their fathers having had no other habitation, during their forty years' sojourning in the wilderness. To this feast some of the kinsmen of the blessed Jesus desired he would accompany them, and there show himself openly to the whole nation of the Jews. They did not themselves believe that he was the great prophet so long expected; and therefore condemned the method he pursued in his public ministry as altogether absurd.

They could not conceive what reason he had for spending so much of his time in the deserts, and remote corners of the kingdom, while he professed so public a character as that of the Redeemer of Israel. Jerusalem, the seat of power, was, in their opinion, much the most proper place for him to deliver his doctrines, and work his miracles in the most public manner possible, before the great and learned men of the nation, whose decision in his favor would have great weight in increasing the number of his disciples, and inducing the whole nation to own him for the Messiah. "Depart hence and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly: If thou do these things,

shew thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe in him." *John*, vii. 3, 4, 5.

Our Lord well knew the rancorous prejudice of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and therefore did not think proper to reside among them any longer than was absolutely necessary. They had more than once attempted his life, and therefore very little hopes remained that they would believe his miracles, or embrace his doctrine; but, on the contrary, the greatest reason to think they would destroy him, if possible, before he had finished the work, for which he assumed the veil of human nature, and resided among the sons of men. "My time," said the blessed Jesus to these unbelieving relations, "is not yet come; but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast; I go not up yet unto this feast, for my time is not yet full come." *John*, vii. 6, 7, 8. As if he had said, It is not proper for me to go before the feast begins; but you may retire to the capital whenever you please; the Jews are your friends, you have done nothing to displease them; but the purity of the doctrines I have preached to them, and the freedom with which I have reproved their hypocrisy, and other enormous crimes, have provoked their malice to the utmost height; and therefore as the time of my sufferings has not yet come, it is not prudent for me to go so soon to Jerusalem.

There was also another reason why our blessed Saviour refused to accompany these relations to the feast of tabernacles; the roads were crowded with people, and these gathering round him, and accompanying him to Jerusalem, would doubtless have given fresh offence to his enemies, and have in a great measure prevented his miracles and doctrines from having the desired effect. He therefore chose to continue in Galilee, till the crowd were all gone to Jerusalem, when he followed, "as it were in secret," neither preaching nor working miracles by the way; so that no crowd attended him to the feast.

As Jesus did not go up openly to Jerusalem, so neither did he, on his arrival, repair to the temple, and there preach openly to the people. This gave occasion for several disputes among the Jews with regard to his character. Some affirmed that he was a true prophet; and that his absenting himself from the feast could be owing only to accident: while others as confidently asserted, that he only deceived the people, and paid no regard to the institutions they had received from heaven.

But about the middle of the feast, Jesus appeared openly in the temple, and taught the people, delivering his doctrines with such strength of reason and elegance of expression that his very enemies were astonished, knowing that he had never enjoyed

the advantage of a learned education. "Now about the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned!" *John*, vii. 14, 15.

To which the great Redeemer of mankind replied, my doctrine was not produced by human wisdom; the sages of the world were not my instructors; I received it from heaven. It is the doctrine of the Almighty, whose messenger I am. "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." *John*, vii. 16.

Nor can he who is desirous of practising the doctrines I deliver, if he will lay aside his prejudices, and sincerely desire to be taught of God, be at a loss to know from whom my doctrines are derived: because he will easily discern whether they are conformable to the will of man, or of God. It is no difficulty to discover an impostor, because all his precepts will tend to advance his own interest, and gratify his pride. Whereas all the doctrines delivered by a true prophet have no other end than the glory of God, however contrary they may prove to himself. "He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory; but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him." *John*, vii. 18.

Our Lord was upbraided with impiety by some of the Jews, because he had healed on the sabbath the impotent man in one of the porches of Bethesda, which they pretended was a violation of the law of Moses, and consequently what no prophet would be guilty of. In answer to which, our blessed Saviour told them, that however they might pretend to reverence the authority of Moses and his law, they made no scruple of violating the most sacred of his precepts: they had resolved to put him to death, directly contrary to every law of God and man; and, in order to execute their detestable scheme, were laying plots against his life.

The people replied, "Thou hast a devil, who goeth about to kill thee?" To which Jesus answered, I have done a miracle of an extraordinary kind on the Sabbath-day, which you think inconsistent with the character of a pious man, and therefore wonder how I could perform it. But surely, Moses gave you the law of circumcision, and you make no scruple of performing that ceremony on the Sabbath-day, because it is a precept both of Moses and the father. Since, therefore, ye think yourselves bound to dispense with the strict observance of the Sabbath, in order to perform a ceremonial precept; can you be angry with me, because, in order to fulfil the great end of all the divine law, I have caused a man who was infirm in all his members, and even with far less bodily labor than you perform the ceremony of circumcision? Consider, therefore, the nature of the thing; divest yourselves of your prejudices, and the super-

stitious opinions taught by your elders, and judge impartially. "Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision, (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers,) and ye on the Sabbath-day circumcise a man. If a man on the Sabbath-day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath-day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." *John*, vii. 22, 23, 24.

Notwithstanding the strength of this argument, several of our blessed Saviour's inveterate enemies asked, with sarcastical surprise, if the boldness of Jesus, and the silence of the rulers, proceeded from their being convinced that he was the Messiah, and at the same time, to deride his pretensions to that high character, said, that they were acquainted both with his parents and relations: but that no man, when Christ appeared, would be able to tell from whence he came; founding their opinion on these words of the prophet Isaiah, "Who shall declare his generation?" *Isaiah*, liii. 8. To which the blessed Jesus answered, that their knowing his parents and relations was no reason against his having the prophetical character of the Messiah. Adding, I am not come of myself, but sent from heaven by God, who has uttered nothing by his servants the prophets concerning the Messiah, but what is true, and will all be fulfilled in me: but ye are totally ignorant of his gracious perfections and gracious counsels, and have no inclination to obey his just commands. You are really ignorant of what the prophets have delivered concerning the Messiah; for had you understood their predictions, you would have known that one of his principal characters is to understand the perfections and will of God more fully, and explain them to the sons of men more clearly than any other messenger ever before sent from the Most High. And would you attentively consider the doctrines I deliver, you would soon perceive this character remarkably fulfilled in me, and be convinced that I came from the Almighty God of Jacob.

This observation, however powerful, and his reasons, however solid, were far from disarming his enemies of their malice; for some of them were desirous of apprehending him; but Providence would not suffer any to lay hands on him, because the time of his sufferings was not yet come. Many of the people, however, convinced by the powerful miracles he had lately wrought, and the unanswerable reasons he had advanced in support of his character, believed on him, and affirmed publicly in the temple, that he was the Messiah. "And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?" *John*, vii. 31.

The scribes and pharisees were highly provoked at this attachment of the common people to Jesus; and accordingly on the last and great day of the feast, they met in council, and sent several officers to apprehend him, and bring him before them. Jesus, during these transactions in the council, continued in the temple teaching the people. My ministry, said he to the multitude, is drawing near its period; and therefore you should, during the short time it has to last, be very careful to improve every opportunity of hearing the word: you should listen with the greatest attention to every discourse, that your minds may be stored with the truths of the Almighty, before I return to my Father; for after my departure, you shall earnestly wish for the same opportunities of seeing me, and hearing my instructions, but shall never obtain them. "Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am thither ye cannot come." *John*, vii. 33, 34.

The Jews, who did not understand that our blessed Saviour alluded to his own death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of the Majesty on high, whither their sins would not permit them to follow him, wondered at this doctrine, and imagined that he intended to leave Judea, and preach to their brethren dispersed among the Gentiles. But this supposition was not sufficient: because if he did go and preach among the Gentiles, they thought it was not impossible for them to follow him thither. "Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am thither ye cannot come?" *John*, vii. 35, 36.

While the divine teacher was thus instructing the people in the temple, the water from Siloam was brought in, according to the appointment of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, part of which they drank with loud acclamations, in commemoration of the mercy shown to their fathers, who were relieved by a stream which miraculously flowed from a rock, and relieved a whole nation, then ready to perish with thirst in a dreary and sandy waste; and the other part they poured out as a drink-offering to the Almighty, accompanying it with their prayers, for the former and latter rain to fall in season; the whole congregation singing the following passage, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." *Isaiah*, xii. 3.

It was the custom of the blessed Jesus to deliver moral instructions, in allusion to any occurrences that happened; and accordingly he took this opportunity of inviting, in the most

affectionate manner, all who were desirous of knowledge or happiness, to come to him and drink, alluding to the ceremony they were then performing. And to encourage all such as were desirous of believing in him, he promised them the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which he represented under the similitude of a river flowing out of their belly. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." *John*, vii. 37, 38.

During this discourse to the people, the officers from the council came to apprehend him; but hearing that the topic he was discussing was a very singular one, and he seemed to deliver his discourse with remarkable fervor, their curiosity induced them to listen some time to his discourse before they laid hands on him. But the eloquent manner in which he delivered his subject, appeased their rage; the sweetness of his pronunciation, and the plainness and perspicuity of his discourse, elucidated the beauties of truth, and caused them to shine before the understanding, with their native lustre. Accordingly, his very enemies, who were come from the council on purpose to apprehend him, were astonished; the greatness of the subject, made as it were visible by the divine speaker, filled their understandings; the warmth and tenderness with which he delivered himself penetrated their hearts; they felt new and uncommon emotions, and being overwhelmed by the greatness of their admiration, were fixed in silence and astonishment: they condemned themselves for having undertaken the office, and soon returned to the rulers of Israel without performing it.

If our Lord had pleaded for his life before the officers of the council who went to apprehend him, the success of his eloquence, even in that case, had been truly wonderful; but in the case before us, it was surely superior to all praise; for in a discourse addressed to others, and even on a spiritual subject, it disarmed a band of inveterate enemies, and made them his friends.

Nor were the officers the only persons affected by this discourse, for many of them declared that he must be one of the old prophets; and others, that he was no other than the Messiah himself. Some, however, led away with the common mistake that he was born at Nazareth, asked with disdain, if the Messiah was to come out of Galilee? And whether they would acknowledge a Galilean for the Messiah, when the Scripture had absolutely declared that he was to be born in Bethlehem, the native town of his father David? "Many of the people, therefore, when they heard this saying, said, of a truth this is the prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said,

Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" *John*, vii. 40, 41, 42.

Such were the dissensions on this subject, that some of his enemies, knowing that the officers were sent to apprehend him, threatened to lay hands on him; but the Almighty would not suffer them to execute their wicked design. "And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him." *John*, vii. 44.

The officers now returned to the council, and were asked, why they had not brought Jesus of Nazareth? whom the officers answered, "Never man spake like this man." This reply enraged the council, who reviled them for presuming to entertain a favorable opinion of one whom they had pronounced an impostor. It is strange, said they, that you, who are not ignorant of our sentiments concerning this person, should entertain a favorable idea of him. Have any person of rank, or celebrated for their knowledge of the laws, believed on him? Are not his followers the low order of the people, who are totally ignorant of all the prophecies concerning the Messiah?

These officers made no answer to these railing accusations of their masters; but Nicodemus, a member of the council, arraigned their conduct in a very poignant manner, "Does our law," says he, "condemn any man before he has been heard?" They had before condemned their officers for being ignorant of the law, when it appeared they were themselves far more ignorant in pretending to condemn a person before they had proved him guilty. They were acting directly contrary to the fundamental principles of the law of equity, at the time they boasted of their profound knowledge of its precepts.

Incensed at this reprimand of Nicodemus, they asked him, with an air of disdain and surprise, if he was also one of those mean persons who had joined together to support the pretences of a Galilean; though the Scriptures had plainly said, that Bethlehem was the place of the Messiah's nativity: adding, that if he refused to listen to them, he should soon be convinced that the great prophet mentioned by Moses was not to be born in Galilee. "Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." *John*, vii. 52.

Having made this reply to Nicodemus, the council broke up, and Jesus, who well knew their malicious intentions, retired to the Mount of Olives, where he spent the night with his disciples.

Our blessed Lord, early the following morning, returned to the temple, and again taught the people. The scribes and pharisees now determined to render him odious to the multi-

tude, or obnoxious to the Roman governor; and therefore placed before him a woman that had been taken in the act of adultery, desiring his opinion what punishment she ought to suffer. "This woman," said they to Jesus, "was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned; but what sayest thou?" *John*, viii. 4, 5.

Had our Lord disapproved the sentence of the law, they would doubtless have represented him to the multitude as a person who contradicted Moses, and favored adultery; which could not have failed of rendering him odious to the people. On the other hand, had he ordered her to be stoned, it would have afforded a plausible pretence for accusing him to the Roman governor as a person who stirred up the people to rebellion, the Romans having now taken the power of life and death into their own hands.

But Jesus, who well knew their malicious intentions, made them no answer, but stooped "down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not." *John*, viii. 6.

They, however, still continued pressing him to give an answer, and, at last, Jesus, in allusion to the law, which ordered that the hands of the witnesses, by whose testimony an adulterer was convicted, should be first upon him, said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." Let those who are remarkably zealous for having justice executed upon others, at least take care to purify themselves from all heinous crimes.

This reply had its desired effect. The hypocritical scribes and pharisees were convicted of sin by their own consciences: so that they immediately retired, fearing Jesus would have made their particular sins public. "And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last." *John*, viii. 9.

The woman's accusers being all retired, Jesus told her, that as no man had pronounced sentence of death upon her, neither would he pronounce it: but advised her to be very careful for the future, to avoid the temptations which had induced her to commit so black a crime.

The wisdom, knowledge, and power of our blessed Saviour were eminently displayed on this occasion: his wisdom in defending himself against the malicious attempts of his enemies; his knowledge in discovering the secrets of their hearts; and his power in making use of their own consciences to render their artful intentions abortive. It was, therefore, with remarkable propriety, that the great Redeemer of mankind, now called himself the "light of the world:" as if he had said, I am the spir-

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"So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."—JOHN VIII. 7.

itual sun, that dispels the darkness of ignorance and superstition, in which the minds of men are immersed, and enlightens the paths that lead to eternal life; nor shall any who follow me, ever be involved in darkness. "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." *John*, viii. 12.

This assertion of our Lord highly provoked the pharisees, who told him he must be a deceiver because he boasted of himself. To which the great Redeemer of mankind replied, You are not to imagine that I call myself the light of the world from a principle of pride and falsehood: that title justly belongs to me: nor would you yourselves refuse to acknowledge it, did you know from what authority I received my commission, and to whom, when I have executed it, I must return. But of these things ye are totally ignorant, and therefore judge according to outward appearance, and condemn me because I do not destroy those who oppose me, as you vainly think the Messiah will do those, who shall refuse to submit to his authority. But the design of the Messiah's coming is very different from your mistaken notions; he is not to destroy but to save the children of men. "Though I bare record of myself, yet my record is true; for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. Ye judge after the flesh, I judge no man." *John*, viii. 14, 15. He added, that if he should condemn any person for unbelief, the condemnation would be just, because his mission was true, being confirmed by his own testimony, and that of his Almighty Father, the God of Jacob, by whose authority, and agreeable to whose will, all his sentences would be passed. "And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me." *John* viii. 16.

Having thus asserted the divinity of his mission, and shown that his judgment was just, he proceeded to inform them that the Father himself bare witness to the truth of his mission. You cannot, said he, justly complain, even if I should punish you for your unbelief, because you are, by your own laws, commanded to believe the testimony of two witnesses, that my mission is evidently true. For the actions of my life, which are perfectly agreeable to the character of a messenger from heaven, bear sufficient witness of me; and the Father, by the miracles he has enabled me to perform, beareth witness of me: ye are therefore altogether culpable in objecting to my mission. "It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me." *John*, viii. 17, 18.

The Jews then asked him, Where is the Father, the other witness to whom thou appliest? Jesus replied, Your conduc

sufficiently demonstrates that ye are strangers both to me and my Father; for had ye known whom I am, ye must have also known whom it is I call my Father; had ye been convinced that I am the Messiah, you must also have been convinced that the Father is no other than that Omnipotent Being, who created and upholds all things by the word of his power. "Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father; if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." *John*, viii. 19.

This discourse, the Evangelist tells us, was held in the treasury or court of the women, where the chests were placed for receiving the offerings of all who came up to worship in the temple; and must therefore have been a place of great resort, being frequented by all, even the priests and rulers. But notwithstanding the public manner in which our blessed Saviour now asserted his claim to the character of the Messiah, no man attempted to seize him; Providence not suffering them to put their malicious designs in execution, because his "hour," or time of his sufferings, "was not yet come."

The debate being ended, Jesus again repeated what he had before told them: namely, that he should shortly depart from them; and that they should then seek him, but not be able to find him. "I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go ye cannot come." *John*, viii. 21. As if he had said, After my ascension into heaven, when the Roman armies shall spread horror and desolation in every corner of the land, ye shall then earnestly wish for the coming of the Messiah, in expectation of being delivered by his powerful arm from your cruel enemy, but ye shall then find your mistake; ye shall die in your sins, and be for ever excluded from the mansions of happiness.

The Jews by no means comprehended this departure of which our Lord told them. They even fancied he would destroy himself, because they thought the only retreat where they could not find him, was the gloomy habitation of the grave. To which the blessed Jesus replied, Your vile insinuation discovers at once the wickedness of your hearts and the baseness of your original. Ye are from the earth, and therefore subject to all the evil passions that infect human nature; and from the dictates of your own hearts, you fancy that I can be capable of committing the horrid crime of self-murder. But my extraction is very different; it is from heaven, and consequently my mind is not tainted with the corruption of human nature, the source of temptation to every sin. You, therefore, must believe that I am the "bread of life," the heavenly manna, the light of the world, the true Messiah, if you are desirous of being cleansed from those pollutions which flow from your earthly origin;

but if ye still continue in your unbelief, "you shall die in your sins."

The Jews now, in order to vindicate themselves, demanded what sort of person he pretended to be? To which Jesus answered, "Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning," that is, at the beginning of this discourse, "the light of the world." Adding, "I have many things to say, and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I spake to the world those things which I have heard of him." *John*, viii. 26.

This discourse, however plain it may appear, was not understood by the perverse Jews; they did not perceive "that he spoke to them of the Father." But Jesus told them, that when they had crucified him, they would be convinced, by the miracles accompanying that awful hour, the resurrection from the dead, the effusion of the Holy Spirit on his disciples, and the destruction of the Jewish nation, who he was, and the Father that sent him. "When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things." *John*, viii. 28.

He added, that though he should be crucified as a malefactor, that punishment would not be inflicted on him, as a consequence of his being deserted by his Father; because he would never leave him in any period of his misery, or even at the hour of death, as he had always acted agreeable to his will.

These words induced many of the people to believe him to be the Messiah. Perhaps by "lifting him up," they did not understand his crucifixion, but his ascension to the throne of David; and hence supposed, that he now entertained sentiments worthy of the Messiah, and were therefore very ready to acknowledge him as such, and believed the doctrine he had delivered concerning his mission. But Jesus told them, that if they persevered in the belief and practice of his word, they should, in reality, become his disciples, have a title to that honorable appellation, be fully instructed in every doctrine of the Gospel, and not only freed from the slavery of sin and its consequences, but also from the ceremonial laws delivered by Moses. "If ye continue in my word, then ye are disciples indeed: and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." *John*, viii. 31, 32.

The Jews, on hearing him mention that they should be made free, answered, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man." This assertion, if taken literally, was absolutely false: the whole nation, at that very time, being in bondage to the Romans; nor were their ancestors any strangers to slavery, having severely felt the hand of tyranny, both in Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon. The expression, therefore, must

be taken in a metaphorical sense, to signify spiritual bondage: it was a freedom by truth, a freedom in respect of religion, which they now asserted. They meant that they were the descendants of illustrious ancestors; and during the worst of times, had preserved sentiments in religion and government worthy of the posterity of Abraham; nor had the hottest persecution of the Assyrian kings been able to compel them to embrace the religion of the heathens. In respect of truth, "we were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?"

In answer to this question, Jesus told them, that those who gave themselves up to a vicious course of life, and to the gratification of their sinful appetites, were absolute slaves, and how far they might deserve that appellation, it was incumbent on them to consider. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." And as a slave cannot be assured of the continuance of his master's favor, or certain of abiding continually in the family; so my Father can, when he pleases, discard such habitual sinners, deprive you of the external economy of religion, in which you so highly boast, as you have through sin, rendered yourselves bondsmen to his justice. If ye are desirous of becoming the children of God, and of remaining for ever in his family, you must submit to the authority of his Son, and embrace his doctrine, which will induce him to adopt us as co-heirs with himself. It is he only that can make you free indeed, and place you in the city of the heavenly Jerusalem, without the least danger of being removed. I well know that ye are in a natural sense, the seed of Abraham, but in a moral one, the offspring of Satan; for many of you are desirous of destroying me, because I enjoin a greater degree of sanctity than you are willing to acquire. "I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father; and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father." *John*, viii. 37, 38, 39.

Notwithstanding their claim to immediate descent from that father of the faithful, Jesus told them, that if they were the spiritual progeny of Abraham, they would resemble that great and good man in his righteousness; and therefore, instead of endeavoring to take away the life of a person who came with a revelation from God, they would believe on him, in imitation of Abraham, who was justly styled the father of the faithful, and the friend of God. "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham." *John*, viii. 36, 40.

Jesus added, that their deeds sufficiently showed whose children they were, and from what stock they were descended; even from the great deceiver of mankind, "who goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

The Jews at length discovered the purport of our Lord's meaning, and accordingly replied, that they were undoubtedly in that sense the children of God, as they were certainly not born of fornication, alluding to the marriage-covenant, which in Scripture is metaphorically said to subsist between God and the people of Israel, and which by their obligation to love, honor, and obey him, was represented in a very lively manner. We are neither, said the Jews, idolaters ourselves, nor sprung from idolatrous parents; consequently we are, with respect to a spiritual descent, the children of God. "We be not born of fornication: we have one father, even God." *John*, viii. 41.

But Jesus told them, that an outward profession of the true religion was of no consequence. They must "love it in deed, and in truth," if they hoped to be, in reality, the children of God: and if they truly loved religion, they must love him who came down from heaven on purpose to reveal it to the sons of men. Adding, that he did not come of himself, but was sent by the great Creator of the universe. "If God were your Father, ye would love me; for I proceeded forth, and came from God: neither came I of myself, but he sent me." *John*, viii. 42.

But ye, continued the blessed Jesus, inherit the nature of your father the devil; and therefore will continue to gratify the lusts ye have derived from him. He was an enemy and a murderer of mankind from the beginning, and has ever since exerted his whole power to work their destruction: sometimes by seducing into sin by his falsities, and sometimes by instigating them to kill those whom God thought proper to send to reclaim them. And having early departed from holiness and truth, a custom of lying is become habitual to him. Being therefore a liar, and the father of lying, when he speaketh a falsity, he speaketh what is properly his own. But I tell you the truth; and therefore it is natural to think that ye will disbelieve me. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do; he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not." *John*, viii. 44, 45.

Though ye dare even to reject my doctrine, are any of you able to show that I have not received my commission from heaven, or that I have done any thing that has a tendency to render me unworthy of belief? Can you show that I have taught

false doctrines, reproved you unjustly for your actions, or been guilty myself of sin? If you are unable to do this, but, on the contrary must acknowledge that my doctrine and life are such as become a messenger of God, what reason can ye pretend for not believing me? "And if," in affirming that I am perfectly free from sin, "I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" Whoever is of God, receives, with the greatest humility, whatever revelations God is pleased to make of himself by his messengers, and makes it his study and delight to obey all his commandments. But ye reject the revelations and precepts of the Almighty, delivered by me, who came down from heaven, for no other reason than because ye are not the children of God. "He that is of God, heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." *John*, viii. 47.

The Jews, still attached to their lineal descent, replied, that his calling the descendants of Abraham the children of the devil, was a sufficient proof that he was a very profligate wretch himself, or instigated by some evil spirit. But Jesus told them he was neither mad nor actuated by an evil spirit. On the contrary, he honored his Father, by speaking the words of truth, which he had sent him to deliver: and, therefore, they dishonored him in calling him by so opprobrious a title. Adding, that he sought not their applause, but referred their conduct to an omniscient and impartial Judge. "And I seek not my own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth." *John*, viii. 50.

Our Lord, having declared his mighty and divine power, asserts the happy effects of faith and obedience to the Gospel. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." *John*, viii. 51. On this declaration, the Jews (who were total strangers to our Lord's spiritual meaning of death) cried out, now we sufficiently know that thou art possessed with a devil; for the most righteous persons that ever flourished among the sons of men are dead: Abraham, and the prophets, and other holy men, are all laid in the chambers of the dust, and yet thou hast the impudence and folly to affirm, that whosoever keeps thy precepts shall never die. Thou surely canst not think, nor pretend to be more in favor with the Almighty than Abraham and the prophets were, who, though the strictest observers of the divine precepts, could not obtain the privilege of being themselves exempt from the stroke of death, much less for their followers. "Now we know that thou hast a devil; Abraham is dead and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead: and the prophets are dead; whom makest thou thyself?" *John*, viii. 52, 53.

In reply to this impertinent query, the Messiah returned, If I should attempt to speak in praise of myself, you would call it vain and foolish, and, like the pharisees, tell me, "Thou bearest record of thyself: thy record is not true." Instead, therefore, of giving you a full description of my dignity, I shall only inform you, that it is my Father who speaketh honorably of me, by the many miracles he enables me to perform. And surely this may be sufficient to convince you of what I have promised for my disciples; especially when I tell you that my Father is no other than the Almighty God of Jacob, whom all the descendants of Abraham pretend to worship. But though you vainly boast of worshipping my Father as your God, you are ignorant of him; you neither form just conceptions of him, nor worship him in the manner you ought. Your knowledge and actions, therefore, disagree with your profession; but, on the contrary, I entertain proper ideas of him, and obey his precepts. You may, perhaps, construe this declaration as proceeding from vanity; but if I should say, I do not form adequate conceptions of him, or acknowledge him as he deserves, I should be a liar like unto you. Even your father Abraham, of whom you so highly boast, earnestly desired to behold the time when I, the promised seed, should put on the veil of human nature and convert the nations of the world from their idolatry to the knowledge and worship of the true God. He earnestly desired to see the great transactions of my life, by which this invaluable blessing was to be procured for all the sons of men: and view the happy state of all nations, when this blessing was bestowed upon them. This was granted him: "he saw it and was glad." He was favored with the ravishing prospect of these happy times, then concealed in the womb of futurity, and was exceedingly transported with the scene. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." *John*, viii. 56.

The Jews, still blind to the spiritual meaning of our Lord's words, concluded he had affirmed that he was before Abraham; and knowing he was not yet forty years old, considered it as absolutely ridiculous. They had no conception of his divine nature, though he had so often told them he was the Son of God, and consequently existed with the Father, long before this world was called from its primitive chaos. This gross stupidity and perverseness induced the Saviour of the world to assert his dignity in still plainer terms: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." *John*, viii. 58.

The Jews, incensed at our Lord's prior claim to Abraham, in point of existence, rushed on him, and attempted to stone him; but Jesus, by rendering himself invisible, passed unhurt through the crowd, and retired out of the temple.

CHAPTER XIX.

Our Lord continues to work Miracles in confirmation of his Mission and Doctrine.—Calls forth and sends out seventy Disciples.—Preaches to the people of Judea, by way of Parable.

THE great Preacher of Israel, having defeated the cruel designs of the obstinate Jews, in passing on his way, saw a man who had been blind from his birth. The sight of so affecting an object could not fail to excite the compassion of the benevolent Saviour of mankind. Nor could the affronts and indignities he had just received from the Jews hinder him from "working the works of him that sent him," and dispensing blessings on that rebellious and ungrateful nation. Accordingly, he beheld this poor blind man, not with a transient view, but fixed on him the eyes of his divine compassion, and presented him with the riches of his adorable love.

The disciples, observing the affectionate regard of their Master to this object of compassion, and probably imagining that he was going to extend his usual mercy to this unfortunate object, asked their Master, whether his blindness was occasioned by his own sin, or the sin of his parents? They had often heard their Master say, that afflictions were commonly the punishment of particular sins; and had learned, from the law of Moses, that sin was the fruitful source of evil; and that the Lord punished the iniquities of the fathers upon the children. Their Master kindly answered, that neither his own nor the sins of the parents were the immediate cause of this peculiar punishment; but that he was born blind, "that the works of God should be made manifest in him;" particularly his sovereignty in bringing him blind into the world, his power in conferring the faculty of sight upon him, and his goodness in bearing witness to the doctrine by which men are to be saved.

We may learn, by this pertinent reply of the Saviour of the world, that a curious inquiry into the afflictions of other men may be safely avoided; and that we ought to suppose every calamity subservient to the glory of Omnipotence; never imputing to their personal sins whatever miseries we behold in others, lest, like the disciples in the present case, we assign to sin, what owes its origin to the glory of our Maker.

Having assigned the cause of this person's blindness, namely, "that the works of God should be made manifest in him," Jesus added, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work;"

John, ix. 4; intimating to his disciples, and all the sons of men, his unwearied labor in the work of his Almighty Father. In this he was employed day and night, during the time of his sojourning in the flesh. To this alone he directed all his thoughts and all his intentions. This he esteemed even as his meat and drink; and for this he suffered the neglect of his ordinary food, that he might finish the blessed, the beneficent work of human salvation. A work, to accomplish which he left the courts of heaven; and during the execution of it, went about doing good.

It was now the sabbath-day, and the blessed Jesus was going to perform a miracle, in which there was to be a small degree of servile work; and therefore he told his disciples, that they need not be surprised to see him work miracles of that kind on the sabbath-day. For though they should imagine that he might defer them till the day of rest was over, his time on earth was so short, that it was necessary for him to embrace every opportunity that offered of working miracles. Perhaps he chose to perform this work on the sabbath, because he knew the pharisees would, for that reason, inquire into it with the utmost attention, and consequently render it more generally known.

But however this be, our blessed Saviour, who was now going to confer sight on one that was born blind, took occasion from thence to speak of himself as one appointed to give light also to the minds of men involved in darkness. "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." *John*, ix. 5.

It appears from hence that our Saviour's miracles were designed not only as proofs of his mission, but also as specimens of the power he possessed as the Messiah. For example, by feeding the multitude with the meat that perished, he signified that he was come to quicken and nourish mankind, with the "bread of life," that sovereign cordial, and salutary nutriment of the soul. His giving sight to the blind was a lively emblem of the efficacy of his doctrine to illuminate the blinded understandings of men. His healing their bodies represented his power to heal their souls, and was a specimen of his authority to forgive sins, as if it was a real, though a partial removal of its punishment. His casting out devils was an earnest of his final victory over Satan, and all his powers. His raising particular persons from the dead was the beginning of his triumph over death, and a demonstration of his ability to accomplish a general resurrection: and, in a word, his curing all promiscuously, who applied to him, showed that he was come not to condemn the world, but to save, even the chief of sinners. Accordingly at, or soon after performing these miracles, when the memory of them was fresh in the minds of his hearers,

we often find him turning his discourse to the spiritual things they reproached. But to return from this digression.

Having declared the salutary design of his coming into the world, "he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is, by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing." *John*, ix. 6, 7.

From former examples it is evident that our blessed Saviour could as easily have performed this miracle without the assistance of any external means. Indeed, those the great Redeemer of mankind made use of on this occasion were so far from being likely to effect the cure, that they seem properly adapted to produce quite a contrary effect. We must, therefore, conclude, that they were intended to direct our attention to higher mysteries, and show us, as in a glass, that it was through the same divine power, who at first created man out of the dust of the earth, and gave sight to his eyes, that lapsed mankind were now restored and regenerated, and the black cement of sin, which closed their eyes, wiped away.

This person seems to have known the power of the Redeemer, or at least to have been informed by some person near him, who Jesus was, the fame of whose miracles had been published in every corner of Judea. Indeed, we cannot otherwise account for the implicit and ready obedience paid him by the blind man, who was amply rewarded for his faith and confidence, by receiving the invaluable gift of sight.

This miraculous operation could not fail of producing a general curiosity and surprise, and induced those who had seen this blind man in his dark and deplorable condition, to be very particular in their inquiries into the means of so singular a miracle. It was doubtless the subject of general conversation; and it is natural to think should also have proved the means of a general conversion; but, as too frequently happens, a perverse curiosity prevented its salutary effects upon their souls. Unbelief, and hardness of heart, led some of them even to doubt of the plainest fact: a fact the most evident and indisputable, and plainly the work of the divinity, and others to persecute at once both the object and the author of it! "The neighbors, therefore, and they which before had seen him, that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he; others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he." *John*, ix. 8, 9.

The man, transported with gratitude and joy, and perceiving his neighbors to doubt of the identity of his person, proclaimed himself to be the very same, whom they lately saw begging in total darkness. I am he thus wonderfully blest with sight,

by the peculiar mercy of the Almighty! I am he who was blind from my birth, whom ye have all seen, and many relieved in my miserable distress! I am he who was, even from my mother's womb, involved in total darkness, but now enjoy the enlivening light of day!

So genuine an acknowledgment of the fact excited their curiosity to know how this admirable effect was produced. "How were thine eyes opened?" To this question he readily replied, "A man that is called Jesus, made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash; and I went and washed, and I received sight." *John*, ix. 11.

They then asked him where the person was, who had performed so stupendous a work? to which the man answered, "I know not;" for Jesus had retired while the man went to wash his eyes in the pool of Siloam, probably to avoid the applauses which would naturally have been given him, and which we see through the whole Gospel he generally studied to avoid.

The neighbors, either stimulated by envy, or excited by a desire of having the truth of this extraordinary event searched to the bottom, brought the man before the council as the proper judges of this affair. Accordingly he was no sooner placed before the assembly, than the pharisees began to question him, "how he had recovered his sight." Not daunted by this awful assembly, though terrible to a man of his mean circumstances, he boldly answered, "He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see." *John*, ix. 15.

On hearing this account of the miracle, the pharisees declared that the author of it must be an impostor, because he had, by performing it, violated the Sabbath-day. But others, more candid in their way of thinking, gave it as their opinion, that no deceiver could possibly work a miracle of that kind, because it was too great and beneficial for any evil being to have either the inclination or power to perform.

The court being thus divided in their opinions with regard to the character of Jesus, they asked the man himself what he thought of the person who had conferred on him the blessing of sight? To which he boldly and plainly answered, "He is a prophet." But the Jews wanting to prove the whole a cheat, started another objection, namely, that this person was not born blind, though all his neighbors had really testified the truth of it. Accordingly, they called his parents, and asked them, Whether he was their son: if he had been born blind; and by what means he had obtained his sight? To which they answered, that he was truly their son, and had been born blind; but with regard to the manner in which he received his sight, and

the person who had conferred it on him, they could give no information: their son was of age, and he should answer for himself. "These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews; for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue." *John*, ix. 22.

This proves that the convictions of conscience act powerfully on the mind: the parents of this blind man well knew by what means their son had received his sight; and like him they should have glorified the divine hand that had wrought so marvellous a work; and dared to have confessed him before all men, whatever dangers might have threatened them. Let us learn from hence, to fear our own, and to pity human frailty, and to implore the assistance of the Holy Spirit to give us courage and resolution in the day of trial: and let us take care not to love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

The pharisees, finding that all attempts either to discredit or disprove the fact, were useless, had recourse to their usual method of calumniating the author of it. They called again "the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner." *John*, ix. 24. To which the man boldly answered these rulers of Israel, "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." *John*, ix. 25.

This reply prevailed not with the obstinate Jews; they were desirous of confounding him with repeated questions, and the art of sophistry, and accordingly asked him, "What did he to thee? How opened he thine eyes?" They had before asked these questions, but now proposed them a second time, in order that the man by repeating his account of the servile work performed at the cure, might become sensible that Jesus had thereby violated the sabbath, and consequently must be an impostor. Thus the enemies of our dear Redeemer would gladly have prevailed on the person who had received the valuable gift of sight, to join with them in the judgment they had passed on the great person who had wrought so stupendous a miracle. But their obstinacy in denying the truth appeared so criminal to him, that he boldly answered, "I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?" *John*, ix. 27.

The council were highly exasperated at this retort. "They reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is." *John*, ix. 28, 29.

The poor man, incensed at their unbelief and hardness of heart, replied, It is very strange that you should not acknowledge the divine mission of a teacher who performs such aston

ishing miracles: for common sense sufficiently declares, that God never assists impostors in working miracles; and accordingly there cannot be found a single example since the creation of the world, of any such person's opening the eyes of one born blind. My opinion, therefore, is, that if this man had not been sent from God, he could not work any miracle at all. "The man answered and said unto them, Why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began, was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing." *John*, ix. 30, &c.

The honest man's arguments, though plain, were powerful, and founded upon truths they could not deny. They all owned that "God heareth not sinners;" they all knew that God had heard Jesus, by the miracle he had wrought, which was a fact proved beyond any possibility of doubt, and was such as never man performed; it therefore undeniably followed, that Jesus was not a sinner, but sent from God, since otherwise he could do nothing.

The pharisees were not ignorant that this argument was conclusive; they felt its whole force, and well knew that it could not be resisted. Accordingly they did not attempt to answer it, but had recourse to punishment and abusive language. Thou wicked, illiterate, impudent mortal, said they, whose understanding is still as blind as thy body lately was, and who wast born under the heaviest punishment of sin, dost thou pretend to instruct in a manner of this kind, the guides of the people, and those who have rendered themselves eminent for their knowledge in the law? "Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us?" *John*, ix. 34.

After their presumptuous taunts, the Evangelist adds, that "they cast him out;" that is, they passed on him the sentence of excommunication, which was the highest punishment they had power to inflict. But though he was cut off from the Jewish society, he was nevertheless thereby united to one, where no unjust sentences can ever be passed, nor any member be ever separated during a joyful eternity.

The presumption of the pharisees, should teach us to contemplate the various arts, and subtle endeavors of all the adversaries and enemies of the Gospel and cross of Christ; and not be surprised to find them, though in different shapes, employed against ourselves, if we zealously embrace the truth of Christ, as well as against all who are not afraid to confess, before all men, the glory of him who hath opened their eyes. It is im-

possible that the world should love those who boldly declare that its works are evil. Let us not therefore be shaken when we come to experience it, but learn from this blind man, freely and openly to confess the faith, and to declare the power of that God, who hath brought us from darkness into his marvellous light, and turned our feet into the way of peace.

The feast of dedication now drew near. This solemnity was not appointed by Moses, but by that heroic reformer, Judas Maccabeus, in commemoration of his having cleansed the temple, and restored its worship, after both had been polluted by Antiochus Epiphanes.

Although this feast was merely a human institution, Jesus determined to be present at it, even though he knew that farther attempts would be made against his life. His public ministry was indeed now drawing near its period; and therefore the blessed Jesus would not omit any opportunity of preaching to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and of doing good to the children of men. Nor did he now, as he had formerly done, travel privately to the capital, but openly declared his intention of going to Jerusalem, and set forward on his journey with great courage and resolution.

The road from Galilee to Jerusalem lay through Samaria, and the inhabitants were those which entertained the most inveterate hatred against all who worshipped in Jerusalem. Jesus being no stranger to this disposition of the Samaritans, thought proper to send messengers before him, that they might, against his arrival, find reception for him in one of the villages. The prejudiced Samaritans, finding the intention of his journey was to worship in the temple at Jerusalem, refused to receive either him or his disciples into their houses.

The messengers being thus disappointed, returned to Jesus, and gave him an account of all that had passed; at which James and John were so exceedingly incensed, that they proposed to their Master to call for fire from heaven in order to destroy such inhospitable wretches; alleging, in excuse for such violent proceedings, the example of the prophet Elijah. "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" *Luke*, ix. 54.

Our Lord, desirous of displaying an example of humility on every occasion, sharply rebuked them for entertaining so unbecoming a resentment for this offence. "Ye know not," said he, "what manner of spirit ye are of." Ye are ignorant of the sinfulness of the disposition ye have now expressed; nor do ye consider the difference of times, persons, and dispensations. The severity exercised by Elijah on the men who came from Ahab to apprehend him was a just reproof to an idolatrous king and people; very proper for the times, and very agreeable

to the characters, both of the prophet who gave it, and of the offenders to whom it was given; and, at the same time, not unsuitable to the Mosaic dispensation. But the Gospel breathes a very different spirit; and the intention of the Messiah's coming into the world, was not to destroy, but to save the lives of the children of men.

Ye wise of this world, who reject saving knowledge, behold here an instance of patience, under a real and unprovoked injury, which you cannot parallel among all your boasted heroes of antiquity! An instance of patience which expressed infinite sweetness of disposition, and should be imitated by all the human race, especially by those who call themselves the disciples of Christ.

Being denied reception by the inhospitable inhabitants of this Samaritan village, Jesus, attended by his disciples, directed his way towards another; and as they travelled, a certain man said to him, "Lord, I will follow thee, whithersoever thou goest." But Jesus, to whom the secret purposes of all hearts were open, knowing he only desired the riches and honors of the Messiah's kingdom, thought proper to make him sensible of his mistake; and accordingly said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." *Luke*, ix. 58. I am so far from boasting of a temporal kingdom, and the power and pomp attending it, that I have not even the accommodations provided by nature for the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air. They have safe and secure retreats; but the Son of man is destitute of an habitation.

Jesus, in the course of his wandering, met with one who had formerly been his disciple, and ordered him to disengage himself from all worldly employments, and to follow him; but he was desirous of excusing himself for the present, under the pretence, that he was bound by the ties of gratitude to continue with his aged father, till death had put a period to his existence, and he had laid his remains in the sepulchre of his ancestors: "Lord," said he, "suffer me first to go and bury my father." To which Jesus answered, "Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." *Luke*, ix. 60. Let those that are immersed in worldly affairs, follow the affairs of the world; but those who have embraced the doctrines of the Gospel do every thing in their power to spread the glad tidings of salvation in every part of the earth.

A third person offered to follow him, provided he would give him the liberty to return to his house, and take leave of his family; but Jesus told him, that he should not suffer any domestic affairs to interfere with the care of his salvation; that the calls of religion were too pressing to admit of the least delay

or excuse whatever; and that all who set themselves to seek the welfare of their souls, should pursue the work assiduously, without looking carelessly around them, as if they were regardless of the work they had undertaken to perform. "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." *Luke*, ix. 62.

As our blessed Saviour's ministry was from this time, till its final period, to be confined to Judea, and the countries beyond Jordan, it was necessary that some harbingers should be sent into every town and village he was to visit, to prepare his way. Accordingly he called his seventy disciples unto him, and after instructing them in the duties of their mission, and the particulars they were to observe in their journey, he sent them into different parts of the country, to those particular places whither he himself intended to follow them, and preach the doctrines of the Gospel to the inhabitants.

Our Lord, according to his own declaration, despatched these disciples on the same important message, as he had done the twelve before.

The harvest was plenteous in Judea and Perea, as well as in Galilee, and the laborers also few; and being never more to preach in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, the cities wherein he had usually resided, he reflected on the reception he himself had met with from the inhabitants of those cities. He foresaw the terrible consequences that would flow from their rejecting his doctrine, and the many kind offers he had made them. He was grieved for their obstinacy; and in the overflowing tenderness of his soul, he lamented the hardness of their hearts. "Wo," said he, "unto thee, Chorazin; wo unto thee, Bethsaida; for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago, repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shall be thrust down to hell." *Luke*, x. 13, 14, 15. To which our Saviour added, as some consolation to his disciples, "He that heareth you, heareth me: and he that despiseth you, despiseth me: and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." *Luke*, x. 16.

Such a token of heavenly regard could not fail of comforting the seventy, and alleviating their minds when thinking of the ill usage they expected to meet with during the course of their mission. They well knew, that the preaching of Christ himself had been often despised, and often unsuccessful, with respect to many of his hearers; and therefore they had not very great reason to expect that they should find a more welcome reception than their Master.

THE DISCIPLES SENT FORTH.

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"After these things, the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face, into every city and place whither he himself would come."—Luke x. 1.

The seventy disciples, having received their instructions, and the power of working miracles from the Messiah, departed to execute their important commission in the cities and villages of Judea and Perea. And after visiting the several places, publishing the glad tidings of salvation, and working many miracles, in confirmation of their mission, they returned to their Master with great joy, saying; "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us, through thy name!"

From this appeal it seems that they knew not the extent of their delegated power: and were pleasingly surprised to find the apostate spirits tremble at their command. To which their great Master replied, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." You will no longer be astonished that the devils are subject to the power I have given you, when I tell you that their prince is not able to stand before me; and accordingly, when I first put on the veil of human nature, to destroy him and his works, I saw him, with the swiftness of the lightning's flash, fall from heaven. Adding, in order to increase their joy, and prove that he had really cast Satan down from the seats of heaven, that he would enlarge their power. "Behold," says he, "I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you." *Luke*, x. 19.

Lest they should exult beyond measure in the honor thus conferred on them, which was merely temporary, our Lord adds, "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because, your names are written in heaven." *Luke*, x. 20.

Nor could the blessed Jesus reflect on the unsearchable wisdom and goodness of the divine dispensation to mankind, without feeling extraordinary joy; so that his beneficent heart overflowed with strains of gratitude; "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." *Luke*, x. 21.

When the disciples had executed their commissions, Jesus left Samaria, and retired into Judea, and in the way was met by a certain lawyer, or scribe, who being desirous of knowing whether the doctrines preached by Jesus were the same with those before delivered by Moses, asked him, What he should do to inherit eternal life? It is really amazing that any mortal should ask a question like this, with a view to tempt, not to be instructed! This was, however, the case; but the blessed Jesus, though no stranger to the most secret thoughts of the heart, did not reply, as he had before done to the pharisees, "Why temptest thou me, thou hypocrite?" He turned the scribe's weapons against himself: What, said he, is written in the law, of which

thou professest thyself a teacher; "How readest thou?" That law will teach thee what thou must do to be saved; and happy will it be for thee, if thou compliest with its precepts. The scribe answered, it is there written, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." *Luke*, x. 27.

Our Lord then shows the strength and spirituality of the law, "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live." Perform these commands, and thou hast fulfilled the duties of an Israelite: for on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Where is the man that can fulfil the law? The lawyer, who in all probability expected no such answer, being conscious of his defects, and consequently, of the impossibilty of obtaining eternal life on these conditions, was willing, as the sacred historian informs us, "to justify himself; was willing to stifle the rising suggestions of his own conscience, and, at the same time, to make a show of his own devotion, and in order to this, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" A question very natural to be asked by a bigoted Jew, whose narrow notions led him to despise all who were not of his own fold; all who were not the natural descendants of his father Abraham.

To remove their obstinate attachment to their own principles, open their hearts to a more generous and noble way of thinking, and show them the only foundation of true love, and the extensive relation they and all mankind stand in to each other, our Saviour delivered the following most beautiful and instructive parable.

A certain person, in his journey from Jerusalem to Jericho, had the misfortune to fall into the hands of robbers, who, not content with taking his money, stripped him of his raiment, beat him in a deplorable manner, and left him for dead. While he continued in this miserable condition, utterly incapable of assisting himself, a certain priest happened to travel the same road; "and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side." And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. So little compassion had these ministers of religion for a brother in the most deplorable circumstances of distress, that they continued their journey without offering to assist so miserable an object, notwithstanding their sacred characters obliged them to perform, on every occasion, the tender offices of charity and compassion. It was a brother, a descendant of Abraham in distress; and therefore those hypocrites could offer no reasons to palliate their inhumanity. Their stony hearts could behold the affecting ob-

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

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"But a certain Samaritan as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him."—LUKE x. 33, 34.

ject of an unfortunate Israelite, lying in the road naked and cruelly wounded, without being the least affected with his distress.

Though these teachers of religion were hypocrites, and wholly destitute of grace and charity, compassion glowed in the heart of a Samaritan, who, coming to the spot where this helpless object lay, ran to him; and though he found him to be a person of a different nation, and one who professed a religion opposite to his own, yet the hatred which had been instilled into his mind from his earliest years, and every objection arising from the animosity subsisting between the Jews and Samaritans, were immediately silenced by the tender sensation of pity, awakened by the sight of such complicated distress; his bowels yearned towards the miserable object: though a Jew, he flew to him and assisted him in the most tender manner.

It was the custom in these eastern countries for travellers to carry their provisions with them; so that this compassionate Samaritan was enabled, though in the desert, to give the wounded man a little wine to recruit his spirits. He also bound up his wounds, pouring into them wine and oil, placed him on his own beast, and walked himself on foot to support him. In this manner he conducted him to an inn, took care of him during the night; and in the morning, when business called him to pursue his journey, recommended him to the care of the host, left what money he could spare, and desired that nothing might be denied him; for whatever was expended he would repay at his return.

Having finished the parable, Jesus turned himself to the lawyer, and asked him, "Which now of those three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?" The lawyer, struck with the truth and evidence of the case, replied, without the least hesitation, "He that shewed mercy on him." Upon which Jesus replied, "Go, and do thou likewise." Perform all the good actions in thy power, extend thy kindness to every one who stands in need of thy assistance, whether he be an Israelite, an Heathen, or a Samaritan. Consider every man as thy neighbor in respect to works of charity, and make no inquiry with regard to his country or religion, but only with regard to his circumstances.

On examination of the particulars of this beautiful parable, we shall find that it is composed in the finest manner to work the conviction designed; so that the lawyer, however desirous of considering those of the Jewish religion only as his neighbors, it was impossible for him to do it on this occasion. The Jews had long considered the favors of a Samaritan as a more detestable abomination than the eating of swine's flesh; yet, notwithstanding this prepossession, the lawyer was obliged to

acknowledge that neither the priest, nor the Levite, but the travelling Samaritan, by discharging the great office of humanity to the Jew in distress, was truly his neighbor; that the like humanity was due from an Israelite to a Samaritan in the like distressed circumstances: and, consequently, that men are neighbors, without any regard to country, kindred, language, or religion.

Mankind are intimately connected by their common wants, and their common weaknesses. Providence has formed them in such a manner, that they cannot subsist without the assistance of each other; and, consequently, the relation subsisting between them is as extensive as their natures, and their obligations to assist each other by mutual good offices, as strong as the necessities of every individual. Our blessed Saviour has, therefore, by this admirable parable, shown that the heart is the seat of genuine grace, and that good principles will ever produce good actions.

CHAPTER XX.

The humble Jesus resides with Martha and Mary, two obscure women of Bethany.—Improves a circumstance which occurred at the feast of Dedication.—Prescribes a mode of prayer to his Disciples and future followers.—Revisits some of the pharisaical tribe.

The feast of the dedication approaching, Jesus turned his course towards Jerusalem, and in the evening came to the house of Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus, at Bethany. Martha was desirous of expressing her regard for the divine guest, by providing for him and his disciples the best entertainment in her power. But her sister, who was of a more contemplative disposition, sat quietly at the feet of Jesus, listening with the utmost attention to his doctrine. For the great Redeemer of mankind never omitted any opportunity of declaring the gracious offers of the Almighty, and his unspeakable love for the children of men. Martha being greatly fatigued with the burden of the service, complained to Jesus of the little care Mary took to assist her; "Lord dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me." *Luke*, x. 40.

But Martha's officiousness incurred our Lord's reproof, who commended Mary for her attentive application to his doctrine.

"Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful. And Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." *Luke*, x. 41, 42.

When Jesus repaired to Jerusalem, to celebrate the feast of dedication, he was informed, that the beggar he had restored to sight, was, by the council, cast out of the synagogue. This information excited the pity of the Son of God: and he resolved to make him full amends for the injury he had suffered. It was not long before he met the suffering person, and said to him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him." *John*, ix. 35—38.

We have hinted, that the beggar was thoroughly convinced the person who opened his eyes was a messenger from heaven; it is, therefore, no wonder that as he knew Jesus was the person who had performed so great a work, he readily believed him to be the Son of God.

Our Saviour having thus given the poor man ample proof of his Messiahship, directed his discourse to the people, and said unto them, "For judgment I am come into this world: that they which see not, might see; and that they which see, might be made blind." *John*, ix. 39. The meaning of our Saviour, though he alluded to the blind man, was spiritual. He did not intend to represent the design of his coming, but the effect it would have on the minds of men; as it would demonstrate what character and disposition every person possessed. The humble, the docile, and the honest, though they were immersed in the night of darkness, with regard to religion, and the knowledge of the Scriptures, should be enlightened by his coming, as the blind man had enjoyed the invaluable gift of sight from his hands: but those who were wise, learned, and enlightened in their own opinion, should appear in their true character, absolutely ignorant, foolish, and blind.

The pharisees, who happened to be present when he spake these words to the people, imagined that he intended to throw a reflection on their sect, which the common people, from their skill in the law, held in great veneration. Accordingly, they asked him, with disdain, "Are we blind also?" Dost thou place us, who are teachers, and have taken such pains to acquire the knowledge of the Scriptures, on a level with the vulgar? To which Jesus answered, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see, therefore your sin remaineth." If ye had not enjoyed the faculties and opportunities of discerning the proofs of my mission, you might have been consid-

ered as blind; but ye are superior to the vulgar, in point of learning, and at the same time your hearts averse from acknowledging the truth, your enlightened understanding will only aggravate your guilt.

Having condemned the obstinacy and pride of the sect, in rejecting the most evident tokens of the divinity of his mission, he continued the reproof, by describing the characters of a true and false teacher. It was our Lord's custom always to allude to objects before him; and being now in the outer court of the temple, near the sheep, which were there exposed to sale, for sacrifice, he compared the teachers among the Jews to shepherds, and the people to sheep; a metaphor often used by the old prophets. He considered two kinds of bad shepherds or teachers; the one, who, instead of entering by the door to lead the flocks to the richest pastures, entered some other way, with an intention only to kill, to steal, and to destroy; the other, who though they entered by the door to feed their flocks, with the dispositions of hirelings, yet when the wolf appeared, they deserted the sheep, having no love for any but themselves. By the former, he plainly alluded to the pharisees, who had cast the man born blind out of the synagogue; for no other reason, than because he would not act contrary to the dictates of his conscience, and agree with them in declaring Jesus to be an impostor. But though they had cast him out of the church, Christ received him into his, which is the true church, the spiritual enclosure, where the sheep go in and out, and find pasture.

To illustrate the allusion, it should be observed, that the sheep which were brought to be sold, were inclosed in little folds, within the outer court of the temple; so that the shepherd himself could not enter, till the porter had opened the door. And from this circumstance, the following parabolical discourse may be easily understood. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheep-fold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief, and a robber." *John*, x. 1. Believe me, that whosoever, in any age of the church, assumed the office of a teacher, without a commission from me, was a thief and a robber; and in the present age, he is no better who assumes that office without my commission, and particularly without believing on me. "But he that entereth in by the door, is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice; and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out; and when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice." *John*, x. 2, 3, 4.

The doctrine here inculcated is, that good men are obedient to the instructions of true and faithful teachers: and, in every case, show them their duty with the greatest plainness, not concealing it, because it may be disagreeable to their inclinations. On the contrary, "A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers." *John*, x. 5. The people of God will not hearken to impostors and false teachers, but will flee from them, like sheep from the voice of a stranger: for they can easily distinguish them from the messengers of God, by their fruits, their doctrines, and their lives.

Thus did the great Redeemer of mankind, by this instructive parabolical discourse, explain to the pharisees the difference between true and false teachers; but they being ignorant of his meaning, he added by way of explication, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep." I am not only the door, by which the shepherd must enter, but I am also the door of the sheep: it is by me that men enter into the spiritual enclosure of the church. "All that ever came before me;" all those, who have presumed to assume the character of teachers of religion, without commission from me, "are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them." *John*, x. 8.

"I am the door" through which alone any one can come acceptably unto God; "By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." If any man believeth on me, he shall become a true member of the church of God upon earth; and shall from time to time, receive such instructions as shall nourish his soul unto eternal life. Our blessed Saviour seems to change the image, in the last particular; and instead of the outer court of the temple, where the sheep were kept, represented an inclosure, where cattle were fed.

"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy; I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." *John*, x. 10. You may easily know that I am neither a thief nor a robber, by considering that the intention of such is only to steal, to kill, and to destroy the flock. They assume the character of teachers, who have received their commissions from heaven, for no other reason than to promote their own interest, at the expense of the souls of men: but I am come merely to give you life, and even much more abundantly than it was given by Moses, in the dispensation of the law.

Nor am I an hireling shepherd, appointed by the owner to take care of the flock; I am the good shepherd, promised by the prophets; the true proprietor of the sheep. This is sufficiently evident from my laying down my life for the safety of the flock. Whereas an hireling, who proposes nothing but his own advantage, when he sees the wolf approaching, deserts the sheep:

his whole care is for his own safety, and therefore he will not expose himself to any danger on their account; so that the wolf, without resistance tears some to pieces, and disperses the rest. "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep." *John*, x. 11—13.

And as I am the good shepherd, and so earnest in tending them, so I know every particular sheep, am able to claim it, in whose possession soever it be, and know every thing relating to the sheep. I know the circumstances wherein they are placed, am well acquainted with their wants, and can judge what assistance they stand in need of. Besides, I love them all with the greatest sincerity, and approve of their obedience to me, because, though it be imperfect, it is sincere. For they have just notions of my dignity and character; and they know that I am their shepherd and Saviour, sent from God; and that I am able to feed them with knowledge, deliver them from the punishment of sin, and bestow on them eternal life, and procure them a place in the blissful mansions of my Father's kingdom. "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." *John*, x. 14.

And this mutual knowledge and love of each other is like that subsisting between me and my Father. "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep." *John*, x. 15.

I will give a convincing proof of the love I bear the sheep; I will lay down my life for them: an instance of regard that will never be given by any hireling.

But I have other sheep, besides these of the seed of Abraham; numbers of my flock are among the gentiles. These also I must bring into my church, and they must cheerfully submit to my laws. There shall be then but one visible church; they shall know me, shall distinguish my voice from that of a stranger, and though consisting of Jews and gentiles, yet they shall have but one shepherd to feed and govern them: for the middle wall of the partition shall be broken down. "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." *John*, x. 16.

And because I lay down my life to save the world, therefore my heavenly Father loveth me. But though I lay down my life, I will take it again; for I will in due time rise from the dead. I do not, however, either lay down my life or rise from the dead, without the appointment of the Almighty. I act in

both according to the divine wisdom, and agreeably to the will of my heavenly Father. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." *John*, x. 17, 18.

Various were the effects produced by this discourse upon the minds of the Jews. Some of them cried out that he was mad, and possessed with a devil, and that it was the highest folly to hear him; while others, who judged more impartially of him and his doctrine, declared that his discourses were not those of a lunatic, nor his miracles the works of a devil; asking those who were enemies to Jesus, if they imagined any devil was able to confer the faculty of sight on one that was born blind?—"There was a division therefore again, among the Jews, for these sayings. And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?" *John*, x. 19—21.

Soon after, as Jesus was standing in Solomon's porch, the Jews came to him, desiring that he would tell them plainly whether he was the expected Messiah, or not? But Jesus knowing that they did not ask this question for information, but to gain an opportunity of accusing him to the Romans, as a seditious person, who endeavored to deceive the people, by pretending to be the great Son of David, promised by the prophets, in order to usurp the kingdom, told them, that they must form a judgment of him from his actions. "I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because you are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." *John*, x. 25, 26. Your unbelief is the effect of your attachment to this world, being unwilling to receive the doctrine of the kingdom of heaven: because you must then renounce all your fond hopes of temporal power and advantages. But, on the contrary, those who are of a meek and humble disposition, and their minds free from worldly passions, easily perceive the truth of my doctrines and miracles, and consequently are readily disposed to become my disciples. Nor shall such persons lose their rewards; for I will willingly receive them and make them partakers of eternal life in my Father's kingdom. And however assiduous malicious men may be, in endeavoring to hinder them from believing on me, they shall never be able to effect their purpose, though assisted by all the powers of darkness. For my heavenly Father, who hath given them to me, is far greater than them all: nor is any man able to contend with him. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life:

and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My father, who gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." *John*, x. 27, &c.

The Jews were so incensed at this declaration, which they considered as blasphemous, that they took up stones to cast at him, in conformity to the law, which commands all blasphemers to be stoned. But Jesus asked them, which of the beneficent miracles he had wrought, in confirmation of his mission, deserved such treatment. "Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?" *John*, x. 32. As if he had said, I have fed the hungry in the desert, I have healed the lame, I have cleansed the lepers, I have cured the sick, I have given sight to the blind, and have cast out devils, and I have raised the dead: for which of these works are ye going to stone me? Do these miracles indicate that the author of them is an impostor? Or can you be so stupid as to think that the Almighty would suffer any person to perform such works, with no other intention than to deceive the human race? The Jews answered, We are far from thinking that thou deservest punishment for any good work thou hast done in favor of the afflicted and distressed: the punishment is intended to chastise thee for thy blasphemous speeches; for thou, though a weak mortal, a being of the day, like ourselves, arrogantly assumest the power and majesty of the Most High, and, by claiming the incommunicable attributes of the Deity, makest thyself God. "For a good work we stone thee not: but for blasphemy, and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." *John*, x. 33.

Jesus replied, has not the Scripture expressly called those "gods," and the "sons of God," who were commissioned to govern God's people, on account of their high office, and the inspiration of the spirit, which was, though sparingly, bestowed upon them? Can you, therefore, impute to that person whom the Almighty had sanctified and sent into the world to save lost mankind, and pay the price of redemption for all the sons of men; can you, I say, impute blasphemy unto him, for taking on himself the title of the Son of God? If my own assertion be not sufficient to convince you of my personal dignity, you must surely think that the many miracles I have wrought abundantly prove that they are the works of the Most High, as Omnipotence alone could perform them; and, therefore, that the Father and I are so united, that whatever I say, or do, is approved of by the Almighty. "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods upon whom the word of God came, and the Scriptures cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the

world, Thou blasphemest; because I said I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe me not, believe the works: that ye may know and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him." *John*, x. 34, &c.

But this reply, instead of satisfying the Jews, rather tended to enrage them the more: and Jesus, seeing it was of no consequence to reason with so headstrong a people, rendered himself invisible, and by that means escaped from them. "Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand." *John*, x. 39.

The feast of the dedication being now over, Jesus departed from Jerusalem, and retired into the parts of Perea beyond Jordan. Here his ministry was attended with great success; for the inhabitants of the country, remembering what had been told them, by John the Baptist, concerning Jesus, and being sensible that the doctrine and miracles of our blessed Saviour were fully equal to what the Baptist had foretold, firmly believed him to be the Messiah.

According to this supposition, which seems the most agreeable to reason, the inhabitants of these countries enjoyed the doctrines and miracles of the Son of God for a very considerable time. But however this be, the Evangelist tells us, that while he was executing his ministry beyond Jordan, he happened to pray publicly with such fervency, that one of his disciples, who was exceedingly affected both with the matter and manner of his address, begged he would teach them to pray. "And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins: for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil." *Luke*, xi. 1—4.

Soon after our blessed Saviour cast out a devil, when some, who were present, ascribed the miracle to Beelzebub; "And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb: and it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered. But some of them said, he casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils." *Luke*, xi. 14, 15. However strange this argument may seem, and however weak and absurd it must appear to impartial judges, yet it had a considerable effect on illiterate persons, especially on those whose prejudices and interests it favored. The pharisees pretended, that as Jesus had been all along at great pains to oppose the

traditions which most of the teachers of that age considered as the essentials of religion, and the principal branches of piety, they concluded that he must be a very wicked person.

They also supposed that a false prophet had the power of working signs and wonders; and thence concluded, that our Saviour performed all his miracles by the assistance of evil spirits, with an intention to turn the people from the worship of the true God.

Another pretended reason for ascribing his miracle to evil spirits was, that the demons themselves, when they departed out of the persons possessed, honored him with the title of the Messiah. Their arguments, though so evidently founded on falsehood, contributed largely to the infidelity of the Jews, and however we may be surprised that such weak reasons should have any effect, considering what multitudes were witnesses of the many miracles the blessed Jesus performed on the sick of all sorts, on the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the maimed, the lame, on paralytics, lunatics, demoniacs, and other miserable objects; nay, on the dead, whom he raised again to life; on the winds and the seas; in a word, on every part of nature; yet experience hath abundantly convinced us, that notwithstanding all these evidences, their own superstitious opinions fixed that headstrong people in their infidelity.

Though part of the multitude were content with ascribing this miracle to the power of evil spirits, others went still farther, desiring him to prove himself the Messiah, by giving them a sign from heaven. But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, refused to grant them this request: telling them that they were a wicked race of mortals, and discovered a very perverse disposition, by seeking, after so many miracles had been performed, a sign from heaven; and therefore, that no greater sign should be given them than the sign of the prophet Jonas. "This is an evil generation; they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet." *Luke*, xi. 29.

"No man," added the Saviour of the world, "when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it into a secret place, neither under a bushel but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light." No man, endued with the Spirit of God, concealeth the blessed gift; but holdeth forth the glorious doctrines of salvation, as it were like a candle, that the light of the same may shine upon the souls of men who hear them. "The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness." *Luke*, xi. 34, &c. Take care, therefore, that thy soul is so completely enlightened by the spirit, that the emanation of its light be not in the least

interrupted by an evil passion or affection; that all the faculties of the soul may be as much enlightened and assisted, as the members of the body are by the bright shining of a candle. "If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light." *Luke*, xi. 36.

Thus did our blessed Saviour prove the truth of his mission against the cavils and sophistical reasoning of his malicious enemies. And when he had done speaking, one of the pharisees present desired he would dine with him. The Redeemer of mankind accepting the invitation, though probably given with an insidious design, accompanied the pharisee to his house, and sat down to meat, but without performing the ceremony of washing, observed by all the other guests.

An omission of this kind could not fail of surprising the pharisee, as he had thereby shown an open contempt of their traditions. Jesus, who well knew the thoughts of this bigoted pharisee, said to him, Your sect are remarkably careful to keep every thing clean that touches your food, lest, by eating it, your body should be polluted; but you take no pains to clean your minds from the pollutions of rapine, covetousness, and wickedness. You must surely be convinced, that he who created the body formed also the soul, and can you imagine, that the Almighty, who requires purity of body, because it is the work of his hands, will not also insist upon a greater purity of soul, which is undoubtedly the far nobler part of human nature? Instead, therefore, of that scrupulous solicitude of washing your hands, when ye sit down to meat, ye should be careful to apply yourselves to the great duty of charity; a duty that will render it impossible for any external things to defile you, but will be at all times acceptable to your Maker. "Now do ye pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without, make that which is within also? but rather give alms of such things as ye have, and behold, all things are clean unto you." *Luke*, xi. 39, &c.

But the pharisees, obstinate and perverse, withstood every means made use of by the benign Redeemer of mankind to conquer their prejudices, and bring them to the knowledge of the truth; and therefore our blessed Saviour treated them, on this occasion, with a kind and wholesome severity, denouncing against them the most dreadful woes, for regarding so zealously the ceremonial parts of religion, and at the same time utterly neglecting the very precepts of their own religion. "Wo unto you, pharisees, for ye tithe mint and rue, and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Wo unto

you, pharisees, for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues and greetings in the markets. Wo unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites: for ye are as graves which appear not and the men that walk over them are not aware of them." *Luke*, xi. 42.

A certain lawyer, who sat at the table, thinking that this rebuke, though levelled principally against the scribes and pharisees, affected his order also, was greatly displeased. But our blessed Saviour, who had never any regard to the persons of men, despised his resentment, and told him, freely, what he thought of their character. "Wo unto you, also, ye lawyers; for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers." *Luke*, xi. 46. You pervert, in a very erroneous manner, the interpretation of Scripture, for no other reason than to favor the tradition of the elders, and by that means lay a burden on the shoulders of the descendants of Jacob, that neither you nor they will touch with one of their fingers.

The blessed Jesus also condemned them for building the sepulchres of the prophets, whom their fathers had murdered; because they did not do it from the respect which they had for the memory of these holy men, but from a secret approbation of their father's actions; as too evidently appeared from their whole conduct. "Wo unto you: for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. Therefore, also, said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world might be required of this generation: from the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation." *Luke*, xi. 47, &c.

Our Lord also reproved the lawyers for filling the minds of the people with notions founded on wrong interpretations of Scripture, whereby they were prejudiced against the Gospel: not being contented with rejecting it themselves, but took care to hinder others from receiving it. "Wo unto you, lawyers: for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered." *Luke*, xi. 52.

Such honest reprimands highly provoked the pharisee and his guests. They were conscious of being guilty of the crimes laid to their charge, but unwilling the people should think them guilty; and, therefore, out of revenge, urged him to speak on a variety of topics, hoping they should be able, by those means,

to find occasion of rendering him obnoxious either to the government or the multitude. "And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things; laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him." *Luke*, ix. 53, 54.

CHAPTER XXI.

Explanation of the origin and opinions of the different Sects among the Jews. Our Lord teaches the multitude by plain discourse, and also by parables.

HAVING undertaken to write the history of the life of our blessed Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, we cannot omit a distinct account of the different sects of the Jews, a people with whom he was most intimately concerned, both as an elucidation of many circumstances, as well as a verification of many things foretold concerning the Messiah.

Josephus reckons four principal sects among the Jews; namely, the Pharisees, the Sadducees (called also Herodians,) the Essenes, and the Galileans. The Evangelists mention only two, the Pharisees and Sadducees.

The rise of the pharisees is unknown. They claim, indeed, the celebrated Hillel for their founder, as he is by some supposed to have lived during the pontificate of Jonathan, about a hundred and fifty years before the birth of Christ; but others, with more reason, suppose that he was cotemporary with the famous Someas, who lived about the time of Herod, long before whom the sect of the pharisees was in high repute. It is therefore probable that they claim Hillel rather as an ornament than as the author of the sect.

One of the most famous tenets of the pharisees was that of an oral tradition handed down from Moses, and to which they attributed the same divine authority as to the sacred books. This being strenuously opposed by the Sadducees and Samaritans, rendered these equally detested by them. But none more incurred their hatred than the blessed Jesus, who embraced every occasion of reproving them for the unjustifiable preference they gave this preferred tradition to the written word of God, and for condemning those as apostates, worthy of death, who did not pay the same, or even a greater regard to the former than to the latter.

Another tenet they embraced, in opposition to the Sadducees, was that of the existence of angels, the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the dead, and future rewards. But with regard to the last, they excluded all who were notoriously wicked from having any share in the happiness of eternity; supposing, that as soon as death put a period to their existence, their souls were conveyed into everlasting punishments.

A third tenet was, that all things were subject to fate: or, as some expressed it, to the heavens. It is not easy to conceive what they meant by this: Josephus, indeed, will have it, that they designed to reconcile the fatality of predestination of the Essenes, with the free will of the Sadducees.

If so, this is not the only absurdity, or even contradiction, which they held: but a certain learned prelate seems to have proved that they attributed all to fate, or to that chain of causes to which the Creator had subjected all things from the beginning; among which the influence of the heavenly bodies was considered the principal. This seems to be hinted at by St. James, in the beginning of his epistle to the new converts, where he explodes the pharasaical leaven by the most beautiful exposition of the immutability of God, the giver of all good, to the mutability of the planets, which, according to that notion, must necessarily vary their aspects from a malign to a benevolent one, and the contrary, even by their natural motions and change of position. This tenet of the pharisees was, therefore, a source of dislike to the doctrines delivered by the blessed Jesus, as these affirm that men are the authors of their own unbelief, disobedience, and obstinacy; and consequently, answerable for that, and all the train of evils these vices draw after them.

But the most distinguished character of the pharisees, and that which rendered them most obnoxious to the just censures of our blessed Saviour, was, their supererogatory attachment to the ceremonial law, their frequent washings, fastings, and prayings, their giving alms publicly, seeking for proselytes, scrupulous tithings, affected gravity of dress, gesture, and mortified looks; their building the tombs of the prophets, to tell the world that they were more righteous than their ancestors, who murdered them, though they were themselves plotting the death of one greater than all the prophets; their over scrupulous observance of the sabbath, to the exclusion of the works of the greatest charity, and many others of the like nature: while they were wholly negligent of the moral and eternal law of mercy and justice, of charity and humility, and the like indispensable virtues. The very best of them contented themselves with abstaining from the actual committing any enormous act, while they indulged themselves in the most wicked thoughts and desires. Nay, some, more hardened in their vices, made no scruple, not only

of coveting, but destroying poor widows' houses; of committing the vilest oppressions, injustice, and cruelties, and of encouraging these enormities in their followers, under the specious cloak of religion and sanctity. Well, therefore, might the great Redeemer of mankind compare them to whited sepulchres, beautiful indeed without, but within full of rottenness and corruption.

The last erroneous opinion we shall mention of the pharisees, common, indeed, to all other sects, but more exactly conformable to their haughty, rapacious, and cruel temper, was, their expectation of a powerful, a conquering Messiah, who was to bring the whole world under the Jewish yoke; so that there was scarcely an inhabitant of Jerusalem, however mean, that did not expect to be made a governor of some opulent province under that powerful prince. How unlikely was it, then, that the preaching of the meek, the humble Jesus, whose doctrine breathed nothing but humility, peace, sincerity, contempt of the world, and universal love and beneficence, should ever be relished by that proud and covetous, that hypocritical sect, or even by the rest of the people, while these, their teachers, so strenuously opposed it.

The sect of the Sadducees is said to have been founded by one Saddoc, a disciple of Antigonus of Socho. Their chief tenet was, that our serving God ought to be free either from slavish fear of punishment or from selfish hope of reward: that it should be disinterested, and flow only from the pure love and fear of the Supreme Being. They added, that God was the only immaterial being: in consequence of which, they denied the existence of angels, or any spiritual substances, except the Almighty himself. It is therefore no wonder, that the Sadducees should take every opportunity of opposing and ridiculing the doctrine of the resurrection.

Another of their tenets, equally opposite to the pharisees, and to the doctrine of Christ, was, that man was constituted absolutely master of all his actions, and stood in no need of any assistance to choose or act: for this reason they were always very severe in their sentences, when they sat as judges. They rejected all the pretended oral traditions of the pharisees, admitting only the texts of the sacred books, and preferred those of Moses to all the rest of the inspired writings.

They were charged with some other erroneous tenets, by Josephus and the Talmudists; but those already mentioned are abundantly sufficient for the purpose. The notions of a future life, universal judgment, eternal rewards and punishments, to men, whom a contrary doctrine had long soothed into luxury, and overgrown fondness for temporal happiness, which they considered as the only reward for their obedience, must, of necessity, appear strange and frightful; and as such could not

fail of meeting with the strongest opposition from them; especially if we add what Josephus observes, that they were, in general, men of the greatest quality and opulence, and consequently, too apt to prefer the pleasures and grandeur of this life to those of another.

The sect of the Galileans (or Gaulonites) so called from Judas the Galilean or Gaulonite, appeared soon after the banishment of Archelaus, when his territories were made a Roman province, and the government given to Coponius. For the Jews considering this an open attempt to reduce them to slavery, Judas took advantage of their discontent: and to ripen them for an insurrection, Augustus furnished them with a plausible pretence, by issuing, about this time, an edict for surveying the whole province of Syria, and laying on it a proportional tax. Judas, therefore, who was a man of uncommon ambition, took occasion from this incident to display all his eloquence, in order to convince the Jews that such a submission was nothing less than base idolatry, and placing men on a level with the God of Jacob, who was the only Lord and Sovereign that could challenge their obedience and subjection. The party which he drew after him, became in a short time so considerable, that they threw every thing into confusion, laid the foundation for those frightful consequences that ensued, and which did not end but with the destruction of Jerusalem.

The Essenes, though not mentioned by the Evangelists, made a very considerable sect among the Jews, and are highly celebrated by Josephus, Philo, Pliny, and several Christian writers, both ancient and modern. It is impossible to trace their origin, or even the etymology of their name. This, however, is certain, that they were settled in Judea, in the time of Jonathan, the brother and successor of Judas Maccabeus, and a hundred and fifty years before Christ.

The Essenes distinguished themselves by their rules and manner of life, and were divided into the laborious and contemplative. The former divided their time between prayer and labor: such as the exercise of some handicraft, or the cultivation of some particular spot of ground, where they planted and sowed such roots, corn, &c. as served for their food; and the latter, between prayer, contemplation and study. In this last they confined themselves to the sacred books and morality, without troubling themselves with any other branch of philosophy.

But the contemplative and laborious, had their synagogues, their stated hours for prayer, for reading and expounding the sacred books. The latter were always performed by the elders, who were seated at the upper end of the synagogue, according to their seniority; while the younger, who were permitted to read the lessons, were placed at the lower. Their expositions

were generally of the allegorical kind, in which they seemed to have excelled all their Jewish brethren. But they paid the greatest regard to the five books of Moses, and considered the lawgiver as the head of all the inspired penmen; they even condemned to immediate death whoever spoke disrespectfully either of him or his writings. Upon this account, they studied, read, and expounded him more than all the rest, and seem to have drawn all their religion chiefly from the Pentateuch. The doctrines and expositions of the elders were received with implicit faith, and in their practice they conformed with an entire submission to all their sect.

With respect to their faith, they believed the existence of angels, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments, like the pharisees: but seem to have had no notion of the resurrection. They considered the souls of men as composed of a most subtle æther, which immediately after their separation from the body, or from the cage or prison, as they called it, were adjudged to a place of endless happiness or misery: that the good took their flight over the ocean, to some warm and delightful region prepared for them; while the wicked were conveyed to some cold and intemperate climates, where they were left to groan under an inexpressible weight of misery. They were likewise entirely averse to the Sadducean doctrine of free-will, attributing all to an eternal fatality or chain of causes. They were averse to all kinds of oaths: affirming that a man's life ought to be such that he may be credited without them. The contemplative sort placed the excellency of their meditative life in raising their minds above the earth, and fixing their thoughts on heaven: when they had attained this degree of excellency, they acquired the character of prophets.

In their practice they excelled all the other sects in austerity. If we may credit Philo, it was a fundamental maxim with them, upon their entrance into the contemplative life, to renounce the world, and to divide among their friends and relations their property and estates. They never ate till after sun-set, and the best of their food was coarse bread, a little salt, and a few stomachic herbs. Their clothing was made of coarse wool, plain but white; they condemned all sorts of unctions and perfumes, as luxurious and effeminate. Their beds were hard, and their sleep short. Their heads or superiors were generally chosen according to seniority, unless there started up among the brotherhood some more conspicuous for learning, piety, or prophetic spirit. Some of them, indeed, were so contemplative that they never stirred out of their cell, or even looked out of their window, during the whole week, spending their time in reading the sacred books, and writing

comments upon them. On the sabbath-day they repaired to their synagogues, early in the morning, and continued there the whole day in prayers, singing psalms, or expounding the sacred books.

Having endeavored to explain the origin and tenets of the several sects among the Jews, we now return to the history of our blessed Saviour, whom we left preaching in the country beyond Jordan, where he was surrounded by an innumerable multitude of people.

In the audience of this vast assembly, he gave his disciples, in general, a charge to beware of the leaven of the pharisees, namely, hypocrisy; because all their actions would be brought to light, either in this world, or in that which is to come: and therefore exhorted them to be very careful never to do any thing which could not bear the light, but to let the whole of their behaviour be honest, just, and good. "Beware ye of the leaven of the pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops." *Luke*, xii. 1—3.

This argument against hypocrisy he improved as a reason for their acquiring another quality, which would much better serve all the ends they could propose; namely, an undaunted resolution in the performance of their duty, founded on a firm confidence in God, who would bring to light the most secret word and thought, publicly condemn the wicked, and justify his faithful servants and children.

Fear not, said he, the malice of the human race; it can extend no farther than the destruction of the body; your soul may bid defiance to their impotent rage. But dread the displeasure of that Almighty Being, who, after he has destroyed the body, is able to confine the soul in eternal torments. Remember, all things are in his power, and that nothing happens without his permission: he provides for the meanest of his creatures, and surely you may think yourselves under his protection, who numbers the very hairs of your head; nor can your enemies touch one of them without his permission. "And I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you, whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? but even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows." *Luke*, xii. 4, &c.

Our Lord, to animate his followers to perseverance, admonishes them to look forward unto the general judgment, when he would acknowledge them as his servants, provided they acknowledged him in this world as their master, and cheerfully and constantly obeyed his commands. But if they were ashamed of him, and his doctrine, before the sons of men, he would disown them before the celestial hosts. And that those, who reviled the Spirit, by whom they performed their miracles, should be punished by the Almighty, in proportion to the malignity of their crime, which is greater than that of reviling the Son of God himself; because it will be impossible for them to repent. "Also, I say unto you, whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God. But he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven." *Luke*, vii. 8, &c.

He also cautioned his disciples not to be perplexed with regard to an answer, when they should be brought before the rulers of the people, because they should be inspired by the Spirit of God. "And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates and powers, take ye no thought how or what ye shall answer, or what ye shall say. For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say." *Luke*, xii. 11, 12.

While our blessed Saviour was delivering these exhortations to his disciples, a certain person among the multitude begged him that he would interpose his authority with his brother, in order to oblige him to divide their paternal inheritance between them: but as this decision properly belonged to the magistrates, our blessed Saviour, who came into the world to redeem the souls of mankind and to purchase for them an eternal, not a temporal inheritance, declined the office. He, however, embraced the opportunity of giving his hearers the most solemn caution again covetousness; declaring, that neither the length nor happiness of human life had any dependence on the largeness of possessions. "Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." *Luke*, xii. 15.

To excite their negligence of the things of this life, he placed before them in the strongest light an example of the bewitching influence of wealth, in the parable of the rich glutton, who was cut off in the midst of his projects, and became a remarkable example of the folly of amassing the goods of this life, without having any regard to the commands of the Almighty. This wretched man, forgetting his own mortality

made preparations for a long and luxurious life, pleasing himself with thoughts of possessing an inexhaustible fund of sensual enjoyments. But alas! while he was providing repositories for his riches, the inexorable king of terrors seized him, and that very night hurried him before the awful tribunal of Omnipotence. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater: and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall these things be, which thou hast provided?" *Luke*, xii. 16, &c.

How solemn the appeal! While he lay waking on his bed, in anxious solicitude, what he should do with his abundance; while his heart was dilated with the hopes of a variety of pleasures and indulgences; in that very moment the golden dream vanishes at once; all his thoughts perish, and, in their stead, a horrid account stares him in the face; a scene of judgment presents itself to his terrified imagination! a dark night of horror in an instant overwhelms that soul to which he had promised so much ease, so much pleasure; and instead of ease, instead of eating, drinking, and making merry, eternal tortures, unspeakable thirst, weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, must be the portion of this miserable soul to all eternity!

"So is he," added our blessed Saviour, "that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God." Thus shall he be taken away from all his soul desireth; thus shall he be torn from all temporal prospects and pleasures. None of his beloved enjoyments shall follow him; naked as he came shall he depart out of the world, nor shall all his riches be able to procure him the least comfort or respite in these scenes of terror. How should this reflection awaken us to a due care of our immortal part! how would it alarm us, when planning fancied schemes of worldly pleasures, without the least regard to the great Disposer of all events! Without his assistance, all our promises of security are vain and foolish; he will surely render all our labors abortive; and in a moment, when we think ourselves secure, the summons shall arrive, swift as the forky lightning's flash, convey us to the boundless regions of eternity, and present us, clothed in all our guilt, before the just, the mighty Author of our being!

This awakening parable exhibits a striking picture of the egregious folly of those who live only for themselves, laying up

treasures for sensual enjoyments, but neglect the grace of God, and the immense treasure of salvation laid up in Jesus Christ.

Having spoken this parable, our Lord proceeded to caution his disciples against anxious cares for the things of this world, from a consideration that the care of God's providence extends to every part of the creation. The fowls of heaven are fed by his bounty, and the lilies that adorn the valleys are supplied with rain from the clouds of heaven: If, therefore, said the blessed Jesus, Omnipotence so carefully provides for the inferior parts of the creation, the children of men have surely reason to rely on his bounty, and depend for subsistence on his merciful hand. He added, that as God had destined them to everlasting happiness in a future life, he would surely provide for them all the necessaries of the present. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." At the same time he gave his disciples another precept, peculiarly calculated for those times, in which the profession of the Gospel exposed men to the loss of their substance: "Sell that ye have, and give alms: provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not; where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." *Luke*, xii. 33, 34.

Having thus recommended to them the disengagement of their affections from the things of this world, he exhorted them to labor after improvement in grace. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he shall return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." *Luke*, xii. 35, 36.

This was spoken in allusion to the customs of the East, where anciently great entertainments were made in the evening; and on these occasions servants demonstrated their diligence by watching, and keeping their loins girded, and their lamps burning, that they might be ready, on the first knock of their master, to open the door. Nor was it uncommon for the master, in order to reward such a servant, to order him a refreshment, and sometimes even give it him with his own hand. In allusion to which custom, our blessed Saviour added, "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching. Verily, I say unto you, that he shall gird himself and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." *Luke*, xii. 37.

Our Saviour enforced this constant watchfulness, and habitual preparation, by reminding them of the uncertainty of his coming: telling his disciples, that as every master of a family, if he knew the coming of the thief, would make some preparation against a surprise, so it would be highly requisite for them to

make some preparations for the approach of their Master, and be always ready to receive him, as the time of his coming was uncertain.

CHAPTER XXII.

Our Lord reproves the ignorance of the people in not understanding the signs which preceded his appearance.—Pertinently replies to an ignorant question and inference concerning the Galileans.—Teaches by parable.—Relieves a distressed Woman.—Is warned to depart the country, in order to escape the resentment of Herod.

The great Preacher of Israel having delivered these salutary admonitions to his disciples and followers, directed his discourse to the unbelieving crowd. You can, said he, by the signs that appear in the sky, and on the earth, form a judgment of the weather; and why can ye not also discover the time of the Messiah's appearance, by the signs which have preceded it? "When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower: and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, can ye discern the face of the sky, and of the earth, but how is it that ye do not discern this time?" *Luke*, xii. 54, &c.

The prediction of the Son of Man coming to punish the Jews for their rebellion and infidelity, delivered under the similitude of one who cometh secretly and unexpectedly to plunder a house, was a loud call to national repentance. In order, therefore, to improve that prediction, he exhorted them to a speedy reformation, telling them that the least degree of reflection would be sufficient to point out to them the best methods they could possibly make use of for averting the impending judgments of the Almighty; illustrating what he had said, by the punishments commonly inflicted on the man who refuses to make a reparation for the injuries he has done his neighbor. "When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him, lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite." *Luke*, xii. 58, 59.

Some of his hearers thought proper to confirm this doctrine, by giving what they considered as an example of it. "There were present at that season, some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices;" thinking that Providence, for some extraordinary crime, had suffered these Galileans to be murdered at the altar.

But our Lord showed them the error of their opinion and inference concerning this point, it being no indication that these Galileans were greater sinners than their countrymen, because they had suffered so severe a calamity, and at the same time exhorted them to improve such instances of calamity, as incitements to their own repentance; assuring them, that if they neglected so salutary a work, they should all likewise perish. "And Jesus answering, said unto them, Suppose ye, that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." *Luke*, xiii. 2, &c.

He illustrated this doctrine, by putting them in mind of the eighteen persons, on whom the tower of Siloam fell; showing them, by this instance, the folly of interpreting the dispensations of Providence in that manner; for though this calamity seemed to flow immediately from the hand of God, yet, in all probability, it had involved people who were remarkable for their piety and goodness. "Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them: think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt at Jerusalem? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." *Luke*, xiii. 4, 5.

To rouse them from their indolence, and to induce them to seek the aid of God's grace and spirit, he added the parable of the fig-tree, which the master of the vineyard, after finding it three years barren, ordered to be destroyed: but was spared one year longer at the earnest solicitation of the gardener. "A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." *Luke*, xiii. 6, &c.

By this parable our blessed Saviour represented the goodness of the Almighty towards the Jews in choosing them for his people, giving them the outward dispensations of religion, and informing them of the improvements he expected they should make of these advantages, and the punishments he would inflict upon them, in case they slighted such benevolent offers.

He also represented by it, in a very beautiful manner, the unbounded mercies of the Almighty, in sparing them, at the intercession of his Son, and giving them a farther time of trial, and still greater advantages, by the preaching of the blessed Jesus, and his apostles; concluding with an intimation, that if they neglected this last opportunity, they should perish without remedy.

During Jesus' abode in the country of Perea, he observed, while he was preaching in one of the synagogues, on the sabbath-day, a woman, who, during the space of eighteen years, had been unable to stand upright. A daughter of Israel laboring under so terrible a disorder, could not fail of attracting the compassion of the Son of God.

He beheld this affecting object: he pitied her deplorable condition, he removed her complaint. She who came into the synagogue, bowed down with an infirmity, was, by the all powerful word of the Son of God, restored to her natural health, and returned to her house upright, and full of vigor.

Such a display of divine power and goodness, instead of exciting the gratitude, so highly offended the master of the synagogue, that he openly testified his displeasure, and reproved the people as sabbath-breakers, because they came on that day to be healed. "There are six days," said this surly ruler to the people, "in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath-day." *Luke*, xiii. 14.

But our blessed Saviour soon silenced this hypocritical pharisee, by showing that he had not deviated from their own avowed practice. They made no scruple of loosing their cattle, and leading them to water on the sabbath-day, because the mercy of the action sufficiently justified them for performing it. And surely his action of loosing, by a single word, a woman, a rational creature, a daughter of Abraham, that had been bound by an incurable distemper, during the tedious interval of eighteen years, was abundantly justified; nor could this bigoted ruler have thought otherwise, had not his reason been blinded by his superstition. "The Lord then answered him and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you, on the sabbath, loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath-day? And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed, and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him." *Luke*, xiii. 15, &c.

From this instance we may form some idea of the pernicious effects of superstition, which is capable of extinguishing reason,

banishing compassion, and of eradicating the most essential principles and feelings of the human breast.

Our Lord having reproved the superstition of the ruler of the synagogue, and observing the acclamations of the people, then proceeded to demonstrate the reason and truth which so effectually supported his kingdom. For he repeated the parables of the grain of mustard-seed and of the leaven, to show the efficacious operations of the Gospel upon the minds of the children of men, and its rapid progress through the world, notwithstanding all the opposition of its most inveterate enemies.

The great Redeemer having now planted the seeds of the Gospel in the country of Perea, crossed the Jordan, and travelled by slow journeys towards Jerusalem, preaching the Gospel in every village, and declaring the glad tidings of salvation to all the inhabitants of those countries.

While he was thus laboring for the salvation of mankind, one of the persons who accompanied him, asked him, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" In all probability, the person who proposed this question, had heard the Son of God describe the success of the Gospel by the parables of the mustard-seed and the leaven; and his notions of the kingdom of the Messiah being those that were then entertained by the Jews in general, he meant a temporal salvation. But Jesus, to convince him that he never intended to erect a secular kingdom, answered the question in a spiritual manner, and told him, that a small number only of the Jews would be saved; exhorting them to embrace the offers of mercy before it was too late, for that many, after the period of their trial was concluded, and their state finally and irreversibly determined, should earnestly desire these benevolent offers, but should be denied their request.

"Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us; and he shall answer, and say unto you, I know ye not, whence ye are." *Luke*, xiii. 24, 25. He also repeated, on this occasion, what he had before delivered in his famous sermon on the mount; and what he had observed to the multitude in commendation of the Centurion's faith; "Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunken in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not, whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down

in the kingdom of God. And behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last." *Luke*, xiii. 26, &c.

Immediately after Jesus had thus preached the kingdom of God to the multitude, certain of the pharisees came to him, and told him, that unless he departed thence, Herod would destroy him: but this concern for his safety was altogether feigned, and the real design no other than to intimidate him, hoping by that means to induce him to leave the country, and retire into Judea, where they did not doubt but the chief priests would find some method of putting him to death. Perhaps Herod himself was privy to this message, and desired that Jesus should leave his territories, though the agonies he had suffered on account of John the Baptist, hindered him from making use of force. That this was really the case seems evident, from the answer our blessed Saviour made to the pharisees. "Go ye," said he, to those hypocritical Israelites, "and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless, I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." *Luke*, xiii. 32, 33.

Having given this answer to the pharisees, he reflected on the treatment the prophets had received from the inhabitants of Jerusalem; pathetically lamented their obstinacy, and the terrible desolation that would in a short time overtake them. "Oh! Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." *Luke*, xiii. 34, 35.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The blessed Jesus accepts the Pharisee's invitation a third time.—Delivers divers Parables, representing the requisites for admittance into the Kingdom of God.—The care of the Redeemer for every one of his people.—The reception of a penitent Sinner; and the punishment of misusing the benefits of the Gospel.

Our Saviour having finished this awful exclamation and prediction, was invited by one of the pharisees to his house. Though he knew that his invitation arose not from a generous motive, yet, as he never shunned any opportunity of doing good even to his most implacable enemies, he accepted it. At his entering the pharisee's house, they placed before him a man that had a dropsy, doubtless with an intention to accuse him for healing on the sabbath-day; being persuaded that he would work a miracle in favor of so melancholy an object. Jesus, who knew the secret thoughts of their hearts, asked the lawyers and pharisees, whether it was "lawful to heal on the sabbath-day?" But they refusing to give any answer to the question, Jesus laid his hand on the diseased person, and immediately his complexion returned, his body was reduced to its ordinary dimensions, and his former health and strength renewed in an instant. So surprising a miracle might surely have convinced the pharisees, that the author must have been endued with power from on high; but, instead of being persuaded that he was a person sent from God, and labored only for the benefit of the children of men, they were contriving how they might turn this miracle to his disadvantage. Our Lord however, soon disconcerted their projects, by proving, that according to their own avowed practice, he had done nothing but what was truly lawful. "Which of you," said he, "shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath-day?" If a misfortune happens to one of your beasts, you make no scruple of assisting it on the sabbath, though the action may be attended with considerable labor: and surely I may relieve a descendant of Abraham, when nothing more is requisite than touching him with my hand. This argument was conclusive; and so plain, that the grossest stupidity must feel its force, and the most virulent malice could not contradict it.

As the entertainment approached, our blessed Saviour had an opportunity of observing the pride of the pharisees, and remarking what an anxiety each of them expressed to obtain the

most honorable place at the table. Nor did he let their ridiculous behaviour pass without a proper animadversion; in which he observed, that pride generally exposes a person to many affronts, and that humility is the surest method of gaining respect. "When thou art bidden," said he, "of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him come and say unto thee, Give this man place: and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room, that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up hither: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." *Luke*, xiv. 8, &c.

Having thus addressed the guests in general, he turned him to the master of the house, and said unto him, "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors: lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind." *Luke*, xiv. 12, 13. Be very careful not to limit thy hospitality to the rich, but let the poor also partake of thy bounty, "And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." *Luke*, xiv. 14.

One of the pharisees, ravished with the delighted prospect of the happiness good men enjoyed in the heavenly Canaan, cried out, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." Blessed is he, who, being admitted into the happy regions of Paradise, shall enjoy the conversation of the inhabitants of those heavenly countries; as those spiritual repasts must regale and invigorate his mind beyond expression. In answer to which, our blessed Saviour delivered the parable of the marriage supper, representing, by the invitation of the guests, the doctrine of the Gospel, and the success those beneficent invitations to the great feast of heaven should meet with among the Jews; foretelling, that though it was attended with every inviting circumstance, they would disdainfully reject it, and prefer the pleasures of a temporal existence to those of an eternal state; while the Gentiles, with the greatest cheerfulness, would embrace the beneficent offer, and thereby be prepared to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the happy mansions of the kingdom of heaven. But as this parable was afterwards spoken by our blessed Saviour in the temple, we shall defer our observations on it, till we come to the history where it was again delivered.

When Jesus departed the pharisee's house, great multitudes of people thronged to him to hear his doctrine; but mistook his

true intention of it, expecting he was going to establish the Messiah's throne in Jerusalem, and render all the nations of the world tributary to his power. The benevolent Jesus therefore took this opportunity to undeceive them; and to declare, in the plainest terms, that his kingdom was not of this world; and, consequently, that those who expected, by following him, to obtain temporal advantages, would find themselves wretchedly mistaken; as, on the contrary, his disciples must expect to be persecuted from city to city, and hated of all men for his name's sake: though it was requisite for those who would be his true followers, to prefer his service to the riches, grandeur, and pleasure of the world; and to show, by their conduct, that they had much less respect and value for the dearest objects of their affections, than for him. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever does not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." *Luke*, xiv. 26, 27.

And in order to induce them to weigh this doctrine attentively in their minds, he elucidated it with two apposite cases, that of an unthinking builder, and that of a rash warrior. The former was obliged to leave his struture unfinished, because he had foolishly begun the building before he had computed the cost; and the latter reduced to the dilemma of being ingloriously defeated, or meanly suing for peace, previous to the battle, having rashly declared war, before he had considered the strength of his own and his enemy's army. "So likewise, whosoever he be of you," added the blessed Jesus, "that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." *Luke*, xiv. 33.

The publicans and sinners, roused by the alarming doctrine of our Lord, listened to it attentively. This opportunity was readily embraced by the great Redeemer of mankind, who not only condescended to preach to them the happy tidings of eternal life, but even accompanied them to their own houses; that, if possible, the seeds of the Gospel might take root in their hearts. But this condescension of the meek and humble Jesus was considered, by the haughty pharisees, as an action too mean for the character of a prophet. They murmured, and were highly displeased at a condescension, which ought to have given them the greatest joy. But Jesus soon showed them their mistake, by repeating to them the parables of the lost sheep and piece of money. Intimating thereby, the great care all prophets and pastors ought to take of those committed to their care, and the obligations they are under of searching diligently for every wandering sinner, whose conversion is a grateful offering to the

Almighty. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth." *Luke*, xv. 10.

To illustrate this doctrine still farther, and show to the greatest sinner, the willingness of God to receive him into his grace and favor, if convinced of his unworthy and lost condition in himself, and imploring forgiveness through the merits of Jesus Christ, and the renewal of his heart by the efficacious influences of his Spirit, he delivered the expressive parable of the prodigal son.

A certain man had two sons, the younger of whom, not content to live in his father's house, safe under his protection, and happy under his eye, desired his father to give him the portion of goods which fell to his share. The indulgent father did not hesitate to grant his request; but the ungrateful son had no sooner obtained what he asked of his parent, than he left the presence and neighborhood of so kind a father, and retired into a far country, where he had an opportunity of indulging, without restraint, his wicked inclinations; and there he wasted his substance in riotous living. Having thus consumed the portion given him by his indulgent parent, he began to feel the miseries of want, and, to add to his misfortunes, a terrible famine arose in that land; so that he soon became acquainted with the sharp stings of hunger. In this distressed condition, he joined himself to a citizen of that country, willing to try every expedient, rather than return to his kind, his merciful father, and humbly confess his faults. His master, from a just contempt of his former prodigality, employed him in the meanest and most contemptible offices; he sent him into his field, to feed swine. Behold here, ye sons of extravagance, a change indeed! Behold this thoughtless prodigal, reduced at once from a life of voluptuousness and gaiety, a life of pleasure and excess, to a life of the most abject slavery, a life of penury and want! Nay, so great was his hunger, so prodigious his distress, that he would even have been contented, in this miserable state, to have satisfied the cravings of hunger, with the husks eaten by the swine: but no man relieved him, no man showed the least compassion for him; so that the very swine were in a better condition than this miserable prodigal!

Thus miserably reduced, he was brought to himself; he had hitherto been in a state of utter forgetfulness; but now began to reflect on his happy condition, while he continued with his father, before he had deviated from the paths of virtue, and to compare it with his present deplorable condition. "How many hired servants of my father," said he to himself, "have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" I will therefore, undeserving as I am, have recourse to his mercy and favor. "I will arise and go to my father," for such he still is,

and I, though wretched and lost, am yet his son; I will therefore, say unto him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son:" that happiness is too great for me to expect or desire. I have, by my behaviour, forfeited all the right I once had in so endearing, so valuable a title: "Make me as one of thy hired servants." I desire nothing more than that thou wouldst mercifully receive me as one of thy hired servants.

Having thus taken a firm resolution of throwing himself at the feet of his father, and imploring forgiveness for his past offences, he did not delay to put it immediately into execution; he arose, and with the utmost expedition came to his father.

A scene of tenderness and affection, amazingly pathetic, now presents itself to our view! His kind, his affectionate father saw him while he was yet afar off; his bowels yearned towards him, he had compassion on his lost, his ruined child: paternal fondness would not suffer him to forbear; he ran to meet him, he fell on his neck, he kissed him. Encouraged by this kind reception, the son fell down at his father's feet and began to make confession of his faults, to plead his own unworthiness, to request his father's pardon. "Father," said he, "I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." He was not suffered to proceed any further; the love of his parent prevented the rest; he commanded his servants to bring the best robe, and put it on him; to put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and to kill the fatted calf, that they might eat and be merry. "For this, my son," said he, "was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

During this transaction, the elder brother was in the field, properly employed in his father's business; but returning from thence, and hearing the sound of mirth, music, and dancing, he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant? The servant replied, that his younger brother was returned, and that his father had killed the fatted calf, because he had received him safe and sound. This news greatly displeased the elder son; he was very angry, and refused to go in, upon which his father came out and entreated him; but he replied, "Lo! these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment, and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf." *Luke*, xv. 29, &c.

His father, with the most amiable condescending tenderness replied, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine; it was meet that we should make merry and be glad

for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again: and was lost, and is found." Though he hath devoured my living with harlots, yet he is both thy brother and my son; thou shouldst not, therefore, be angry, because he has repented, and is returned, after we thought him irrecoverably lost.

Thus beautifully did our Lord represent the work of grace on the heart of man, from the first conviction of sin to the absolute confession of it; showing at the same time, there can be no true confession, without a thorough consciousness of guilt, a sense of our lost state, and an entire reliance on the mercy of God, through Christ our Lord.

There are three expositions given of this instructive representation, each of which seems to have some place in the original design; for it should be observed, and carefully remembered, that the parables and doctrines of our Saviour are by no means to be confined absolutely to one single point of view, since they frequently have relation to different objects, and consequently prove the riches and depth of the manifold wisdom of Omnipotence.

In this parable, for instance, the great and principal doctrine intended to be particularly inculcated, is, that sinners, upon their repentance, are gladly received into favor; or, that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. There are, however, two other expositions of this parable: the first is, that of the greatest part of the ancients, who expound it of Adam. He was made in the image of God, and endowed with many excellent gifts, which he might have used happily, had he been content to stay in his father's house; but, like this younger brother, who foolishly desired his portion of goods to himself, that he might be his own master, and under no confinement or restriction; he was unwilling to remain under the obedience of the divine precept; he was desirous of having a free use of things in Paradise, and by the devil's instigation affected a wretched independency, which caused him to break the divine command, and eat of the forbidden tree, to obtain the knowledge of good and evil. Thus he lost for himself, and his posterity, the substance put at first into his possession; but his heavenly Father, on his and his posterity's return, hath provided such grace and compassion for them, that they may be reinstated in their former place and favor. And the same grace not being granted to the higher order of intellectual beings, the fallen spirits, is the cause of their murmuring against God and men, represented by the answer of the elder brother in this parable.

Others, secondly, with a much greater show of probability, expound this parable of the two people, the Jews and gentiles, and who have both one Father, even God. And while they

both continued in their Father's house, the true church, they wanted for nothing; there was plenty of food for the soul, there was substance enough for them both. But the latter, represented by the younger brother, possessed of his share of knowledge, went into a strange country, left God, and spent his substance, the evidence and knowledge of the Almighty, fell into idolatry, and wasted all he had in riotous living; all his knowledge of God, in the loose and absurd ceremonies of idolatry. Then behold a mighty famine arose in that land; the worship of the true God was banished the country. In this dreadful dearth and hunger, he joined himself to the devil, and worked all "Uncleanness with greediness." But finding nothing to satisfy his spiritual hunger, this prodigal, long estranged from his father, reflecting on his spiritual famine, and his own severe wants, humbly confessed his faults, returned to his offended Father, was readmitted into favor, and blessed with the privileges of the Gospel. But the elder brother, the Jewish church, daily employed in the field of legal ceremonies, and who had long groaned under the yoke of the law, seeing the gentiles received into the covenant of the Gospel, obtain the remission of sins, and the hopes of everlasting life, murmured against the benevolent acts of the Almighty. God, however, out of his great compassion, pleaded pathetically the cause with the elder brother, offered him all things, upon supposition of his continuing in his obedience, and declared that he had delivered the nations from the heavy yoke of the ceremonial law.

Thus the parable has a very clear and elegant exposition: the murmuring of the elder brother is explained to us without the least difficulty; and as the offence of receiving the gentiles to pardon and peace through Jesus Christ, was so great a stumbling block to the Jews, it is natural to imagine that our Saviour intended to obviate and remove it by this excellent parable.

It is however evident, both from the context and the occasion of delivering it, that the third interpretation is the first in design and importance. The publicans and sinners drew near to hear Jesus. This gave occasion to a murmuring among the pharisees; and upon their murmuring, our Saviour delivered this and two other parables, to show, that if they would resemble God, and the celestial host, they should, instead of murmuring, rejoice at seeing sinners willing to embrace the doctrines of the Gospel; because there is joy in the presence of God and his angels over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety-and-nine just persons that "need no repentance."

The obstinacy and malicious temper of the pharisees, who opposed every good doctrine, made a deep impression on the spirit of the blessed Jesus; he did not therefore content himself barely with justifying his receiving sinners, in order to their

being justified and saved through him, but in presence of the scribes and pharisees, turned himself to his disciples and delivered the parable of the artful steward, as an instance of the improvements made by the children of this world, in embracing every opportunity and advantage for improving their interests. "There was," said he, "a certain rich man, which had a steward, and the same was accused unto him, that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship: for thou mayest be no longer steward." *Luke*, xvi. 1, 2.

This reprimand of his lord, and the inward conviction of his own conscience that the accusation was just, induced him to reflect on his own ill management of his lord's affairs, and in what manner he should support himself when he should be discharged from his service. "What shall I do?" said he, "for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship; I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed." *Luke*, xvi. 3.

In this manner he deliberated with himself, and at last resolved on the following expedient, in order to make himself friends, who would succour him in his distress: "I am resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses; so he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? and he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, take thy bill, and write fourscore." *Luke*, xvi. 4, &c.

To illustrate this parable, we beg leave to observe, that the riches and trade of the Jews originally consisted principally in the products of the earth: they were, if we may be allowed the expression, a nation of farmers and shepherds: so that their wealth chiefly arose from the produce of their flocks and herds, and the fruits of the earth; their corn, their wine, and their oil.

Thus the steward, to secure the friendship of his lord's tenants, bound them to him under a lasting obligation; and his master, when he heard of the proceedings of the steward, commended him, not because he had acted honestly, but because he had acted wisely; he commended the art and address he had shown, in procuring a future subsistence; he commended the prudence and ingenuity he had used with regard to his own private interest, and to deliver him from future poverty and distress. "For the children of this world," added the blessed Jesus, "are in their generation wiser than the children of light." They are more prudent and careful, more anxious and circumspect to secure their possessions in this world, than the children of light are to secure in the next an eternal inheritance. "And

I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." *Luke*, xvi. 9.

This advice of our Saviour is worthy our most serious attention; the best use we can make of our riches being to employ them in promoting the salvation of others. For if we use our abilities and interest in turning sinners from the evil of their ways; if we spend our wealth in this excellent service, we shall conciliate the good-will of all the heavenly beings, who will greatly rejoice at the conversion of sinners, and with open arms receive us into the mansions of felicity.

But this is not the whole application our Saviour made of this parable. He added, that if we made use of our riches in the manner he recommended, we should be received into those everlasting habitations, where all the friends of virtue and religion reside; because, by our fidelity in managing the small trust of temporal advantages committed to our care, we show ourselves worthy and capable of a much greater trust in heavenly employments. But if, on the contrary, we do not apply our riches to the glory of God, and the good of mankind, we shall be for ever banished from the abode of the blessed; because, in behaving unfaithfully in the small trust committed to us here, we render ourselves both unworthy and incapable of a share in this everlasting inheritance. "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much. If, therefore, ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" *Luke*, xvi. 10, &c.

And, if, while ye are God's stewards and servants, ye desert your trust and become slaves to the desire of riches, you can expect no other than to be called to a strict account of your stewardship; covetousness being as absolutely inconsistent with a true concern for the cause of Christ, as it is for a man to undertake at one and the same time to serve two masters of contrary dispositions, and opposite interests. "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." *Luke*, xvi. 13.

The hypocritical pharisees treated this observation with derision; to which our Lord replied, "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." *Luke*, xvi. 15.

Such is the parable, and such is our Lord's application of it, from whence the main intention and design of it is very evident.

It was intended to incite us to a zealous concern for our future and eternal state, by making a due use of the means of grace, and working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, yet remembering, that it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure. And if we thus employ our spiritual talents, we shall joyfully stand at the right hand of the great Judge of all the earth, and receive from him a public testimony of our faith and love. "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the beginning of the world; for I was an hungered and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

CHAPTER XXIV.

Jesus rebukes the insolent derision of the Pharisees.—Describes by a parable, the nature of future rewards and punishments, and enforces the doctrine of mutual forbearance.

THE doctrines lately delivered by our Lord, being so repugnant to the avaricious principles of the pharisees, they attended to the doctrine of our Saviour, with regard to the true use of riches, and the impossibility of men serving God and mammon; but at the same time they derided him as a visionary speculatist, who despised the pleasures of this world, for no other reason than because he was not able to procure them. It is, therefore, no wonder, that men, who had shown such a complication of the very worst dispositions, should receive a sharp rebuke from the meek and humble Jesus; accordingly, he told them that they made, indeed, specious pretences to extraordinary sanctity, by outwardly shunning the company of sinners, while in private they made no scruple of having society with them, or even of joining with them in their wickedness. "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts." Ye may, indeed, cover the foulness of your crimes with the painted cloak of hypocrisy, and in this disguise deceive those who look no further than the outside, but ye cannot screen your wickedness from the penetrating eye of Omnipotence, to whom all things are naked and exposed, and who judges of things, not by their appearances, but according to truth; it is, therefore, no wonder that he often abhors both persons and things that are held

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"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of sores."—LUKE XVI. 19, 20.

by men in the highest estimation: "for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."

This affected sanctity, while the mind is unrenewed, is an abomination to the God of purity and truth. Jesus Christ detested hypocrisy, and frequented the company of publicans and sinners, to bring about their conversion; the Mosaic dispensation, which made a difference between men, ceasing when John the Baptist first preached the doctrine of repentance; and the gospel dispensation which admits all repenting sinners, without distinction, then commenced. "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." *Luke*, xvi. 16.

Think not I mean to destroy, but to fulfil, the law, which is of essential obligation; for till the law is abrogated, the least of its precepts cannot be neglected. "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." *Luke*, xvi. 17.

After treating of these particulars, he proceeded to consider the love of pleasure, so highly valued by the pharisees, whose lust discovered itself by their frequent divorces, a practice which our blessed Saviour justly condemned: "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband, committeth adultery." *Luke*, xvi. 18.

These reasons were clear and unanswerable; but the pharisees, stupified and intoxicated with sensual pleasures, were deaf to every argument, how powerful soever, provided it was levelled against their lusts. In order to illustrate this truth, confirm his assertion, and rouse these hypocritical rulers from their lethargy, he spoke the awakening parable of the rich man and the beggar.

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table; moreover," so great was his misery, so exquisite his distress, "the dogs came and licked his sores." Thus wretched in life, the Almighty, at last, released him: "the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Nor could the rich man's wealth rescue him from the same fate: "the rich man also died, and was buried." But behold now the great, and awful change! "In hell, he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeing Abraham afar off, and" the late despised and afflicted "Lazarus in his bosom." In this agony of pain and distress, he cried to Abraham, his earthly father, begging that he would take pity on him, and send Lazarus to give him even the least degree of relief, that of dipping the tip of his finger in water to cool his tongue, for his torment was

intolerable. "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot: neither can they pass to us that would come from thence." *Luke*, xvi. 24, &c.

The miserable wretch, finding it impossible to procure any relief for himself, was desirous of preserving his thoughtless relations from the like distress. "Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." *Luke*, xvi. 27, 28. This also was a petition that could not be granted. It is too late to hope for relief, when the soul is cast into the bottomless pit. They may learn, said Abraham, the certainty of the immortality of the soul, from the books of Moses and the prophets, if they will give themselves the trouble to peruse them attentively. To which the miserable object replied, that the books of Moses and the prophets had been ineffectual to him, and he feared would be so to his brethren. But if one actually arose from the dead, and appeared to them, they would certainly repent, and embrace those offers of salvation they had before slighted. "Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." But Abraham told him, that in this he was greatly mistaken, for that if they refused to believe the evidence of a future state, contained in the writings of Moses and the prophets, the testimony of a messenger from the dead would not be sufficient to convince them. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

This truth, asserted by Abraham, has been abundantly proved by undeniable facts; from whence it has appeared, that those who will not be convinced by a standing revelation, will not be convinced though one rose from the dead. These very Jews, to whom our Saviour spoke, were remarkable instances of this truth; they were fully assured, that another Lazarus was, by the power of Christ, raised from the dead, after he had lain several days in the tomb: a fact which they were so far from being able to disprove, that they attempted to kill Lazarus; as if, by this wicked action, they could have destroyed his evidence. Nay, they still had a more lively proof, in the resurrection of Jesus himself, which they were so far from being able to deny, that they bribed the soldiers to spread that senseless tale, that this disciples came by night and stole him away. So true were Abraham's words, that they

who believe not Moses and the prophets, which testify of Christ and his eternal redemption, would not be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

There is not a more awakening and alarming example than this parable through the whole Gospel: it is drawn in such lively colors, that many, in all ages of the church, have considered it not as a parable, but as a real history; but however this be, the important truths delivered in it are equally clear, and equally certain. They are designed to describe the difference between this state and a future, between the children of this world and the children of light, the former having had their portion of happiness here; but the latter being reserved to a glorious one hereafter.

Having thus reprimanded the pharisees, he took occasion to speak of affronts and offences, described their evil nature, and their dreadful punishment. "It is impossible," said he, "but that offences will come: but wo unto him through whom they come. It were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones." *Luke*, xvii. 1, 2. That is, the children of God, the followers of the Lamb, must meet with disgrace, reviling, and persecution here; but wo unto those who revile and persecute them; they had better undergo the worst of temporary judgments than the awful one that shall ensue.

He spake also against a quarrelsome temper in his servants, especially in the ministers and teachers of religion, prescribed a seasonable and prudent reprehension of the fault, accompanied with forgiveness on the part of the person injured, as the best means of disarming the temptation that may arise from thence. "Take heed to yourselves; if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him: and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." *Luke*, xvii. 3, 4.

It should be observed, that this discourse on forgiveness, uttered at a time when the pharisees had just affronted him, by calling him a false teacher, sufficiently proves how truly he forgave them all the personal injuries they had committed against him: and should be a powerful recommendation of that amiable virtue, the forgiveness of injuries.

But however beautiful these discourses of our Saviour appear, when examined with attention, they seem to have staggered the faith of his disciples and followers; perhaps they still imagined that he would shortly erect a temporal kingdom, and distribute among them the rewards they expected for their services. If so, they might well desire their master "to increase their faith;" as discourses like these had a very different tendency from what

might naturally be expected from one who was going to establish the throne of David, and extend his sceptre over all the kingdoms of the earth; but however this be, our Saviour told them that if they had the smallest degree of true faith, it would be sufficient for overcoming all temptations, even those which seem as difficult to be conquered as the plucking up trees, and planting them in the ocean. "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye might say unto this sycamore-tree, Be thou plucked up by the roots, and be thou planted in the sea, and it should obey you." *Luke*, xvii. 6.

CHAPTER XXV.

Our Lord is applied to in behalf of poor Lazarus.—Cures ten persons of the leprosy in Samaria, and restores Lazarus to life.

Soon after our blessed Saviour had finished these discourses, one of his friends, named Lazarus, fell sick at Bethany, a village about two miles from the countries beyond Jordan, where Jesus was now preaching the Gospel. The sisters of Lazarus finding his sickness was of a dangerous kind, thought proper to send an account of it to Jesus; being firmly persuaded that he who had cured so many strangers would readily come and give health to one whom he loved in so tender a manner. "Lord," said they, "behold he whom thou lovest is sick;" they did not add, Come down and heal him, make haste and save him from the grave: it was sufficient for them to relate their necessities to the Lord, who was both able and willing to help them from their distress.

"When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death." This declaration of the benevolent Jesus being carried to the sisters of Lazarus, must strangely surprise them, and exercise both their's and his disciples' faith; since it is probable, that before the messenger arrived at Bethany, Lazarus had expired. Soon after, Jesus positively assured his disciples that "Lazarus was dead."

The Evangelist, in the beginning of this account, tells us, that Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus; and after that he had received the message, he abode two days in the same place where he was. His design in this might be to intimate that his lingering so long after the message came, did not proceed from a want of concern for his friends, but happened

according to the counsels of his own wisdom. For the length of time which Lazarus lay in the grave put his death beyond all possibility of doubt, removed every suspicion of fraud, and consequently afforded Jesus a fit opportunity of displaying the love he bore to Lazarus, as well as his own divine power, in his undoubted resurrection from the dead. His sisters, indeed, were by this means kept awhile in painful anxiety, on account of their brother's life, and at last pierced by the sorrows of seeing him die; yet they must surely think themselves abundantly recompensed by the evidence, according to the Gospel, from this astonishing miracle, as well as by the inexpressible surprise or joy they felt, when they again received their brother from the dead.

Two days being thus expired, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go into Judea again." *John*, xi. 7. His disciples were astonished at this proposal, and the recollection of his late danger, in that country, alarmed them: "Master," said they, "the Jews of late sought to stone thee: and goest thou thither again?" Wilt thou hazard thy life among those who desired nothing more than to find an opportunity of killing thee? "Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world: But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." *John*, xi. 9, 10.

By this he intended to inform his disciples that those who lived by faith, and acted under the infallible influence of the divine Spirit, could not stumble; whereas, those who followed the directions of unenlightened nature, were liable to perpetual error.

Jesus having removed their groundless apprehensions, and strengthened their faith, that he might clearly explain to them the cause of his going to Judea again, told them, "our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." The disciples understanding his discourse in a literal sense, replied, "Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well:" his distemper is abated, and he, in all probability, is recovering. It would be, therefore, highly unreasonable in us, to take two days' journey, only to awake him out of his sleep. Thus they discovered their fears, and hinted to their Master, that it would be far safer to continue where they were, than to take a hazardous journey into Judea.

They were, however, mistaken; for the Evangelist informs us, that he "spake of his death, but they thought he had spoken of taking rest in sleep." Jesus, therefore, to remove any doubt, said plainly to them, "Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes, that I was not there, (to the intent ye may believe.") I am glad for your sakes, that I was not in Judea

before he died; for had I been there and restored him to his health, your faith in me, as the Messiah, must have wanted the great confirmation it shall now receive, by your beholding me raise him from the dead.

Having thus given his disciples a proof of his divine knowledge, and of the designs of Providence in the death of Lazarus, our blessed Saviour added, "Nevertheless let us go unto him." Thus Jesus, who could have raised Lazarus without opening his lips, or rising from his seat, leaves his place of retirement beyond Jordan, and takes a journey into Judea, where the Jews lately attempted to kill him; because his being present in person, and raising Lazarus again to life, before so many witnesses at Bethany where he died, and was so well known, would be the means of bringing the men of that place, as well as others, who should hear of it even in future ages, to prepare for a resurrection unto eternal life: an admirable proof! as an emblem of which, he gave them this great miracle.

Jesus having thus declared his resolution of returning into Judea, Thomas conceiving nothing less than destruction from such a journey, yet unwilling to forsake his Master, said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Let us not forsake our Master in this dangerous journey, but let us accompany him into Judea, that if the Jews, whose inveteracy we are well acquainted with, should take away his life, we also may expire with him.

The journey to Judea being thus resolved on, Jesus departed with his disciples, and in his way to Bethany passed through Samaria and Galilee. "And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go, shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that as they went, they were cleansed." *Luke*, xvii. 12, &c.

Among these miserable objects, one of them was a native of the country, who, perceiving that his cure was completed, came back, praising God for the great mercy he had received. He had before kept at a distance from the Saviour, but being now sensible that he was entirely clean, approached his benefactor, that all might have an opportunity of beholding the miracle, and fell on his face at his feet, thanking him, in the most humble manner, for his condescension in healing him of so terrible a disease. Jesus, in order to intimate that those who were enlightened with the knowledge of the truth ought, at least, to have shown as great sense of piety and gratitude as this Samaritan, asking, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger." *Luke*, xvii. 17.

Jesus and his disciples now continued their journey towards Bethany, where he was informed by some of the inhabitants of that village, that Lazarus was not only dead, as he had foretold, but had now lain in the grave four days. The afflicted sisters were overwhelmed with sorrow; so that many of the Jews from Jerusalem came to comfort them concerning their brother.

It seems the news of our Lord's coming had reached Bethany before he arrived at the village: for Martha, the sister of Lazarus, being informed of his approach, went out, and met him; but Mary, who was of a more melancholy and contemplative disposition, sat still in the house. No sooner was she come into the presence of Jesus, than in an excess of grief she poured forth her complaints; "Lord," said she, "if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." If thou hadst complied with the message we sent thee, I well know that thy interest with heaven had prevailed: my brother had been cured of his disease, and delivered from the chambers of the grave.

Martha, doubtless, entertained a high opinion of our Saviour's power; she believed that death did not dare to approach his presence; and, consequently, if Jesus had arrived at Bethany before her brother's dissolution, he had not fallen a victim to the king of terrors. But she imagined it was not in his power to heal the sick at a distance; though, at the same time, she seemed to have some dark and imperfect hopes that our blessed Lord would still do something for her. "But I know," said she, "that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." She thought that Jesus could obtain whatever he desired by prayer; and therefore did not found her hopes on his power, but on the power of God through his intercession. She doubtless knew that the great Redeemer of mankind had raised the daughter of Jairus, and the widow's son at Nain, from the dead; but seems to have considered her brother's resurrection as much more difficult: probably, because he had been longer dead.

But Jesus who was willing to encourage this imperfect faith of Martha, answered, "Thy brother shall rise again." As these words were delivered in an indefinite sense, with regard to time, Martha understood them only as an argument of consolation, drawn from the general resurrection, and accordingly answered, "I know that he shall rise again at the resurrection, at the last day." She was firmly persuaded of that important article of the Christian faith, *the resurrection of the dead:* at which important hour she believed her brother would rise from the chambers of the dust. And here she seems to have terminated all her hopes, not thinking that the Son of God would call her brother from the sleep of death. Jesus, therefore, to instruct her in

this great truth, replied, "I am the resurrection and the life." I am the author of the resurrection, the fountain and giver of that life they shall then receive; and therefore can, with the same ease, raise the dead now, as at the last day. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" To which Mary answered, "Yea, Lord; I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." I believe that thou art the true Messiah, so long promised by the prophets, and therefore believe that thou art capable of performing every instance of power that thou art pleased to claim.

Martha now seemed to entertain some confused expectations of her brother's immediate resurrection; and leaving Jesus in the field, ran and called her sister, according to his order, being willing that both Mary and her companions should be witnesses of this stupendous miracle.

Mary no sooner heard that Jesus was come, than she immediately left her Jewish comforters, who only increased the weight of her grief, and flew to her Saviour. The Jews, who suspected she was going to weep over the grave of her brother, followed her to the great Prophet who was going to remove all her sorrows. Thus the Jews, who came from Jerusalem to comfort the two mournful sisters, were brought to the grave of Lazarus, and made witnesses of his resurrection.

As soon as Mary approached the great Redeemer of mankind, she fell prostrate at his feet, and in a flood of tears poured out her complaint: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." No wonder the compassionate Jesus was moved at so affecting a scene; on his side stood Martha, pouring forth a flood of tears; at his feet lay the affectionate Mary, weeping and lamenting her dear departed brother: while the Jews, who came to comfort the afflicted sisters, unable to confine their grief, joined the solemn mourning, and mixed their friendly tears, in witness of their love for the departed Lazarus, and in testimony to the justice of the sisters' grief, for the loss of so amiable, so deserving a brother. Jesus could not behold the affliction of these two sisters, and their friends, without having a share in it himself; his heart was melted at the mournful scene, "he groaned in spirit, and was troubled."

To remove the doubts and fears of these pious women, he asked them, where they had buried Lazarus; not that he was ignorant where the body of the deceased was laid; he who knew that he was dead, when so far distant from him, and could raise him up by a single word, must know were his remains were deposited; to which they answered, "Lord, come and

see." The Son of God, to prove that he was not only so, but a most compassionate man, and to show us that the tender affections of the human heart, when kept in due bounds,—that friendly sorrow, when not immoderate, and directed to proper ends, is consistent with the highest sanctity of the soul, joined in the general mourning. He wept, even at the time that he was going to give the most ample proof of his divinity.

By his weeping, the Jews were convinced that he loved Lazarus exceedingly; but some of them interpreted this circumstance to his disadvantage; for, according to their mean way of judging, they fancied he had suffered him to fall by the stroke of death, for no other reason in the world, but for want of power to rescue him. And thinking the miracle said to have been wrought on the blind man, at the feast of tabernacles, at least as difficult as the curing an acute distemper, they called the former in question, because the latter had been neglected. "Could not this man," said they, "which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?"

Our Lord, regardless of their question, but grieving for the hardness of their hearts, and the blindness of their infidelity, groaned again within himself, as he walked towards the sepulchre of the dead. At his coming to the grave he said, "Take ye away the stone." To which Martha answered, "Lord, by this time he stinketh; for he hath been dead four days;" or, as the passage may be better rendered, hath lain in the grave four days. She meant to intimate, that her brother's resurrection was not now to be expected; but Jesus gave her a solemn reproof, to teach her that there was nothing impossible with God, and that the power of the Almighty is not to be circumscribed within the narrow bounds of human reason; "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" i. e. Have but faith, and I will display before thee the power of Omnipotence.

The objections of Martha being thus obviated, she, with the rest, waited the great event in silence; and, in pursuance of the command of the Son of God, took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. Jesus had, on many occasions, publicly appealed to his own miracles as the proofs of his mission, though he did not generally make a formal address to his father, before he worked those miracles. But being now to raise Lazarus from the dead, he prayed for his resurrection, to convince the spectators that it could not be effected without an immediate interposition of the Divine Power. "Father," said he, "I thank thee that thou hast heard me, and I knew that thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me."

John, xi. 41, &c. I entertain no doubt of thy empowering me to do this miracle, and therefore did not pray for my own sake; I well knew that thou hearest me always. I prayed for the sake of the people, to convince them that thou lovest me, hast sent me, and art continually with me.

After returning thanks to his Father for this opportunity of displaying his glory, "He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth!" This loud and efficacious call of the Son of God awakened the dead; the breathless clay was instantly reanimated; and he who had lain four days in the chambers of the tomb, obeyed immediately the powerful sound. "And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin: Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go." *John*, xi. 44. It would have been the least part of the miracle, had Jesus, by his powerful word, unloosed the napkin wherewith Lazarus was bound; but he brought him out in the same manner as he was lying, and ordered the spectators to loose him, that they might be the better convinced of the miracle; for, in taking off the grave-clothes, they had the fullest evidence both of his death and resurrection. For, on the one hand, the manner in which he was swathed, must soon have killed him if he had been alive when buried; which consequently demonstrated, beyond all exception, that Lazarus had been dead several days before Jesus called him again to life: besides, in stripping him, the linen offered both to their eye and smell, abundant proofs of his putrefaction; and by that means convinced them that he had not been in a delirium, but was really dead. On the other hand, by his lively countenance appearing, when the napkin was removed, his fresh color, and his active vigor, those who came near, and handled him, must be convinced that he was in perfect health, and had an opportunity of proving the truth of the miracle by the closest examination. There is something exceedingly beautiful in our Lord's behaviour on this occasion: he did not utter one upbraiding word, either to the doubting sisters, or the malicious Jews, nor did he let fall one word of triumph or exultation. "Loose him, and let him go," were the only words we have recorded. He was in this, as on all other occasions, consistent with himself, a pattern of perfect humility and absolute self denial.

Such was the astonishing work wrought by the Son of God at Bethany; and in the resurrection of Lazarus, thus corrupted, and thus raised by the powerful call of Jesus, we have a striking emblem, and a glorious earnest, of the resurrection of our bodies from the grave, at the last day, when the same powerful mandate which spoke Lazarus again into being, shall collect the scattered particles of our bodies, and raise them to immortality.

Such an extraordinary power, displayed before the face of a multitude, and near to Jerusalem, even overcame the prejudices of some of the most obstinate among them. Many believed that Jesus could be no other than the great Messiah, so long promised: though others, who still expected a temporal prince, and were therefore unwilling to acknowledge him for their Saviour, were filled with indignation, particularly the chief priests and elders. But this miracle, as well as all the rest he had wrought in confirmation of his mission, was too evident to be denied; and therefore, they pretended that his whole intention was to establish a new sect in religion, which would endanger both church and nation. "Then gathered the chief priests and the pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." *John*, xi. 47, &c.

The common people, astonished at his miracles, will, if we do not take care to prevent it, certainly set him up for the Messiah: and the Romans, under pretence of a rebellion, will deprive us both of our liberty and religion. Accordingly, they came to a resolution to put him to death. This resolution was not, however, unanimous; for Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and other disciples of our Saviour, then members of the council, urged the injustice of what they proposed to do, from the consideration of his miracles and innocence. But Caiaphas, the high-priest, from a principle of human policy, told them, that the nature of government often required certain acts of injustice, in order to procure the safety of the state. "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." *John*, xi. 49, 50.

The council having thus determined to put Jesus to death, deliberated for the future only upon the best methods of effecting it; and, in all probability, agreed to issue a proclamation, promising a reward to any person who would deliver him into their hands. For this reason our blessed Saviour did not now go up to Jerusalem, though he was within two miles of it; but went to Ephraim, a city on the borders of the wilderness, where he abode with his disciples, being unwilling to get too far into the country, because the passover, at which he was to suffer, was now at hand.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The great Prophet of Israel foretells the ruin of the Jewish State, and enforces many important Doctrines by parable.—He blesseth the Children, as emblems of the Heavenly and Christian temper and disposition.

WHILE the blessed Jesus remained in retirement on the borders of the wilderness, he was desired by some of the pharisees to inform them when the Messiah's kingdom would commence. Nor was their anxiety on that account a matter of surprise; for as they entertained very exalted notions of his coming in pomp and magnificence, it was natural for them to be very desirous of having his empire speedily erected. But our Saviour, to correct this mistaken notion, told them, that the Messiah's kingdom did not consist in any external form of government, erected in some particular country by the terror of arms, and desolation of war; but in the subjection of the minds of men, and in rendering them conformable to the laws of the Almighty, which was to be effected by a new dispensation of religion, and this dispensation was already begun. It was, therefore, needless for them to seek in this or that place for the kingdom of God, as it had already been preached among them by Christ and his apostles, and confirmed by innumerable miracles. "The kingdom of God," said he, "cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here, or lo there; for behold, the kingdom of God is within you." *Luke*, xvii. 20, 21.

Having thus addressed the pharisees, he turned himself to his disciples, and in the hearing of all the people, prophesied the destruction of the Jewish state; whose constitution, both religious and civil, was the chief difficulty that opposed the erection of his kingdom. But because love and compassion were eminent parts of our Saviour's temper, he mentioned that dreadful catastrophe in such a manner as might tend to the reformation and profit of his hearers. He informed them, that the prelude to this final destruction would be an universal distress; when they should passionately wish for the personal presence of the Messiah to comfort them, but would be denied their request. "The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it." *Luke*, xvii. 22. He next cautioned them against those who should recommend different ways of escaping the awful catastrophe, but are utterly unable: "And they shall say to you, See here, or see there; go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven

shineth into the other part under heaven, so shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation." *Luke*, xvii. 23, &c.

The coming of the Son of man shall be sudden and unexpected. He will come in his own strength, and with great power; he will throw down all opposition, destroy his enemies with swift destruction, and establish his religion and government upon the face of the earth, as suddenly as lightning darts from one part of the heaven to the other. But before these things come to pass, he must suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

Notwithstanding this sudden destruction and calamity that was to overwhelm the Jews, he told them, their stupidity would be equal to that of the old world, at the time of the deluge, or that of Sodom, before the city was destroyed; "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark; and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all; even thus it shall be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the house-top, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away; and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife." *Luke*, xvii. 26, &c.

A more proper example than that of Lot's wife could not have been produced; for if any of his hearers, through an immoderate love of the world, should be prevailed on, in order to save their goods, after they were admonished from heaven of their danger, by the signs which prognosticated the destruction of Jerusalem; or if any of them, through want of faith, should think that the calamities predicted to fall on the nation would not either be so great or so sudden as he had declared, and did not use the precaution of a speedy flight; they might behold in Lot's wife an example both of their sin and of their punishment. He added, that those who were anxiously desirous of preserving life, from an attachment to its pleasures and vanities, should lose it; whereas, those who were willing to lay down their lives in his cause, should preserve them eternally. "Whosoever shall seek to save his life, shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life, shall preserve it." *Luke*, xvii. 33.

Having foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, our blessed Saviour spake the following parable, in order to excite them to a constant perseverance in prayer, and not to be so weary and faint in their minds, as to neglect, or wholly omit, the necessary duty,

There was in a city, said the Saviour of the world, a judge, who, being governed by atheistical principles, had no regard to the precepts of religion, and being very powerful, did not regard what was said of him by any man; so that all his decisions were influenced merely by passion or interest. In the same city was also a widow, who, having no friends to assist her, was absolutely unable to defend herself from injuries, or procure redress for any she had received. In this deplorable situation, she had recourse to the unjust judge, in order to obtain satisfaction for some oppressive wrong she had lately received; but the judge was so abandoned to pleasure, that he refused, for a time, to listen to her request; he would not give himself the trouble to examine her case, though the crying injustice pleaded so powerfully for this distressed widow. She was not, however, intimidated by his refusal; she incessantly importuned him, till, by repeated representations of her distress, she filled his mind with such displeasing ideas, that he was obliged to do her justice, merely to free himself from her importunity. "Though," said he to himself, "I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest, by her continual coming, she weary me." *Luke*, xviii. 4, 5.

The sentiment conveyed by our blessed Saviour in this parable, is very beautiful. We hence learn that the cries of the afflicted will, by being incessantly repeated, make an impression even on the stony hearts of wicked men, who glory in their impiety, and laugh at all the precepts of justice, virtue, and religion; and, therefore, cannot fail of being regarded by the benevolent Father of the universe, who listens to the petitions of his faithful servants, and pours on their heads the choicest of his blessings.

"Hear," said the blessed Jesus, "what the unjust judge saith; and shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily." *Luke*, xviii. 6, &c. As if he had said, if this man, though destitute of the fear either of God or man, was thus prompted to espouse the cause of the widow; shall not a righteous God, the Father of his people, avenge on the wicked the many evils they have done unto them, though he bear long with them?—Certainly he will, and that in a most awful manner.

Our blessed Saviour having thus enforced the duty of prayer, in this expressive parable, asked the following apposite question: "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" As if he had said, notwithstanding all the miracles I have wrought, and the excellent doctrines I have delivered, shall I find, at my second coming, that faith among the children of men there is reason to expect? Will not most of

them be found to have abandoned the faith, and wantonly ask, "where is the promise of his coming?"

The blessed Jesus next rebuked the self-righteous pharisees. But as these particulars are better illustrated by their opposites he placed the character of this species of men in opposition to those of the humble; describing the reception each class met with from the Almighty, in a parable of the pharisee and publican, who went up together to the temple, at the time when the sacrifice was offered, to direct their petitions to the God of their fathers.

The pharisee, having a high opinion of his own righteousness, went far into the court of the temple, that he might be as near the place of divine residence as possible. Here he offered his prayer, giving God the praise of his supposed righteousness; and, had he been possessed of any, he would have acted properly. "God," said he, "I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tythes of all that I possess." *Luke*, xviii. 11, 12.

Having thus commended himself to God, he wrapped himself up in his own righteousness: and giving the poor publican a scornful look, walked away, perhaps to transgress some of the weightier matters of the law; judgment, justice, and truth: and to devour the houses of distressed widows and helpless orphans. But how different was the behaviour of the humble publican! Impressed with a deep sense of his own unworthiness, he would not even enter the courts of the temple; but stood afar off, and smote upon his breast, and in the bitterness of his soul, earnestly implored the mercy of Omnipotence. "And the publican standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." *Luke*, xviii. 13.

Specious as the pharisee's behaviour may seem, his prayer was an abomination to the Lord; while the poor publican, who confessed his guilt, and implored mercy, was justified in the sight of God, rather than this arrogant boaster.

This parable sufficiently indicates that all the sons of men stand in need of mercy. Both the strict pharisee, and the despised publican, with the whole race of mankind, are sinners; and consequently, all must implore pardon of their benevolent Creator. We must all ascend to the temple, and there pour forth our prayers before the throne of grace; for there he has promised ever to be present, to grant the petitions of all who ask in sincerity and truth through the Son of his love.

These parables were spoken in the town of Ephraim: and during his continuance in that city, the pharisees asked him, Whether he thought it lawful for a man to put away his wife for

every cause? Our Saviour had twice before declared his opinion of this particular, once in Galilee, and once in Perea; it is therefore probable that the pharisees were not ignorant of his sentiments, and that they asked that question then, to find an opportunity of incensing the people against him, well knowing that the Israelites held the liberty which the law gave them of divorcing their wives, as one of their chief privileges. But however that be, Jesus was far from fearing the popular resentment, and accordingly declared the third time against arbitrary divorces. The pharisees then asked him, why they were commanded by Moses to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? Insinuating, that Moses was so tender of their happiness, that he gave them liberty of putting away their wives, when they saw occasion. To which Jesus answered, "Because of the hardness of your hearts, Moses suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so." As unlimited divorces were not permitted in the state of innocence, so neither shall they be under the Gospel dispensation. "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery. And whoso marrieth her which is put away, doth commit adultery." *Matt.* xix. 9.

The disciples were greatly surprised at their Master's decision; and though they held their peace, while the pharisees were present, yet they did not fail to ask him the reason on which he founded his determination, when they were returned home. "And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter: and he saith unto them, whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery. *Mark*, x. 10, &c.

The practice of unlimited divorces, which prevailed among the Jews, gave great encouragement to family quarrels, were very destructive of happiness, and hindered the education of their common offspring. Besides, it greatly tended to make their children lose that reverence for them which is due to parents, as it was hardly possible for the children to avoid engaging in the quarrel.

Our Lord's prohibition, therefore, of these divorces, is founded on the strongest reasons, and greatly tends to promote the welfare of society.

Our Saviour having, in the course of his ministry, performed innumerable cures, in different parts of the country, several persons, thinking, perhaps, that his power would be as great in preventing as in removing distempers, brought their children to him, desiring that he would put his hands upon them and bless them. The disciples, however, mistaking the intention, were angry with the persons, and rebuked them for endeavoring to

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"But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."—MATT. XIX. 14.

give this trouble to their master. But Jesus no sooner saw it, than he was greatly displeased with his disciples, and ordered them not to hinder parents from bringing their children to him. "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God." *Luke*, xviii. 16.

Such are those, in a spiritual light, who are brought to a sense of their sins, and humbled for them in the sight of God.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Our Lord departs from his retirement.—Declares the only way of salvation.—Shows the duty of improving the means of grace by the Parable of the Vineyard.—Prediction of his suffering, and contention of the Disciples about precedence in his kingdom.

The period of our blessed Saviour's passion now approaching, he departed from Ephraim, and repaired, by the way of Jericho, towards Jerusalem: but before he arrived at Jericho, a ruler of the synagogue came running to him, and kneeling down before him, asked him, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" *Matt.* xix. 16.

Though this young ruler pretended to pay great honor to our dear Redeemer, yet the whole was no more than a piece of raillery. For though he styled him "good," yet he did not believe that he was sent from God, as sufficiently appears from his refusing to observe the counsel given him by Jesus: nor could his artful insinuations escape the piercing eye of the great Saviour of the world. He well knew his secret intentions, and beheld the inmost recesses of his soul: and accordingly rebuked him for his hypocritical address, before he answered his question. "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God." *Matt.* xix. 17. But as he had desired the advice of our blessed Jesus, who never refused it to any of the sons of men, he readily answered his question, by telling him that he must observe all the moral precepts of the law; there being a necessary connexion between the duties of piety towards the Almighty, and of justice and temperance towards men; the latter of which were much more difficult to counterfeit than the former. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder; Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt not steal; Thou shalt not bear false witness; Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.—

The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up; What lack I yet?" *Matt.* xix. 17, &c.

These commandments, perhaps, he had obeyed in the vague sense put upon them by the doctors and interpreters of the law; and, therefore, the character he here gave of himself might be very just. For though he was far from being a person who feared God from his heart, he might have appeared, in the sight of men, as a person of a very fair character. And having maintained that character, notwithstanding his great riches, he certainly deserved commendation; and therefore might be noticed by that benevolent person, who left the bosom of his Father, to redeem lost mankind. But he was, at the same time, very faulty, with regard to his love of sensual pleasures; a sin, which might have escaped even his own observation, though it could not escape the all-seeing eye of the Son of God. Our blessed Saviour, therefore, willing to make him sensible of his secret desire of possessing the riches of this world, told him, that if he aimed at perfection, he should distribute his possessions among the poor and indigent, and become his disciple. "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me."

His heart being set upon his possessions, he had no inclination to a religion that enjoined self-denial, and parting with our darling sins. "But when the young man heard this saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." *Matt.* xix. 22.

This melancholy instance of the pernicious influence of riches over the minds of the children of men, induced our blessed Saviour to caution his disciples against fixing their minds on things of such a frightful tendency, by showing how very difficult it was for a rich man to procure a habitation in the regions of eternal happiness. "Verily, I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel" (i. e. a cable, or large rope) "to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his disciples heard it they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." *Matt.* xix. 23, &c.

If man be not assisted by the grace of God, it will be impossible for him to obtain the happy rewards of the kingdom of heaven: but by the assistance of grace, which the Almighty never refuses to those who seek it with their whole heart, it is very possible.

This answer of the blessed Jesus was, however, far from satisfying his disciples, who had, doubtless, often reflected with

pleasure on the high posts they were to enjoy in their Master's kingdom. Peter seems particularly to have been disappointed: and therefore addressed his Master in the name of the rest, begging him to remember that his apostles had actually done what the young man had refused. They had abandoned their relations, their friends, their possessions, and their employments, on his account: and therefore desired to know what reward they were to expect for these instances of their obedience? To which Jesus replied, that they should not fail of a reward, even in this life; for immediately after his resurrection, when he ascended to his Father, and entered on his mediatorial office, they should be advanced to the honor of judging the twelve tribes of Israel; that is, of ruling the church of Christ, which they were to plant in different parts of the earth. "Verily, I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his Glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." *Matt.* xix. 28.

Having given this answer to Peter, he next mentioned the rewards his other disciples should receive, both in this world and in that which is to come. They, said he, who have forsaken all for my sake, shall be no losers in the end: their benevolent Father, who intends to give them possessions in the heavenly Canaan, will not fail to support them, during their long and painful journey to that happy country; and raise them up friends who shall assist them with those necessaries they might have expected from their relations, had they not left them for my sake. Divine Providence will take care they have every thing valuable that can be given them by their relations, or they could desire from large possessions. They shall, indeed, be fed with the bread of sorrow, but this shall produce joys to which all the earthly pleasures bear no proportion; and, in the end, obtain everlasting life. They shall leave this vale of tears, with all its pains and sorrows, behind them, and fly to the bosom of their Almighty Father, the fountain of life and joy, where they shall be infinitely rewarded for all the sufferings they have undergone in this world.

Things shall then be reversed, and those who have been reviled and contemned on earth, for the sake of the Gospel, shall be exalted to honor, glory and immortality: while the others shall be consigned to eternal infamy. "But many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first." *Matt.* xix. 30.

These words seem also to have been spoken to keep the disciples humble; for in all probability they at first understood the promise of their sitting on twelve thrones, in a natural sense: as they were ready to construe every expression to a temporal kingdom, which they still expected their Master would erect

upon earth. Our blessed Saviour, therefore, to remove all thoughts they might entertain of this kind, told them that though he had described the rewards they were to expect for the ready obedience they had shown to his commands, and the pains they were to take in propagating the Gospel among the children of men; yet those rewards were spiritual, and not confined to the Jews alone, but extended also to the Gentiles, who in point of time, should excel the Jews, and universally embrace the Gospel, before that nation was converted.

To excite their ardent pressing forward in faith and good works, our Lord relates the parable of the householder, who, at different hours of the day, hired laborers to work in his vineyard. "The kingdom of heaven," says our blessed Saviour, "is like unto a man that is a householder, which went early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard: And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out, about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place, and said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out, about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So, when even was come, the lord of the vineyard said unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the good man of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst thou not agree with me for a penny? take that thine is, and go thy way; I will give unto this last even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen." *Matt.* xx. 1, 2, 3, &c.

Such is the parable of the householder, as delivered by our Saviour: and, from the applications he has made of it, it will not be difficult to interpret it. The dispensation of religion which God gave to mankind, in different parts of the world, are represented by the vineyard. The Jews, who were early mem-

bers of the true church, and obliged to obey the law of Moses, are the laborers which the householder hired early in the morning. The Gentiles who were converted at several times, by the various interpositions of Providence, to the knowledge and worship of the true God, are the laborers hired at the third, sixth, and ninth hours. And the invitation given at the eleventh hour, implies the calling of persons in the eve of life, to the knowledge of the Gospel. The law of Moses was a heavy yoke; and therefore the obedience to its precepts was very elegantly represented by bearing the heat and burden of the whole day. But the proselyted Gentiles, paid obedience only to some particular precepts of the law; bore but part of its weight; and were therefore represented by those who were hired at the third, sixth, and ninth hours; while those heathens who regulated their conduct by the law of nature only, and esteemed the works of justice, piety, temperance, and charity, as their whole duty, are beautifully represented as laboring only one hour in the cool of the evening.

When the evening was come, and each laborer was to receive his wages, they were all placed upon an equal footing; these rewards being the privileges and advantages of the Gospel. The Jews, who had borne the grievous yoke of the Mosaic ceremonies, murmured when they found the Gentiles were admitted to its privileges, without being subject to their ceremonial worship. But we must not urge the circumstance of the reward so far as to fancy that either Jews or Gentiles merited the blessings of the Gospel, by their having labored faithfully in the vineyard, or having behaved well under their several dispensations.

The glorious Gospel, with all its blessings, was bestowed entirely by the free grace of God, and without any thing in men to merit it; besides, it was offered promiscuously to all, whether good or bad, and embraced by persons of all characters. The conclusion of the parable deserves our utmost attention; we should meditate upon it, and take care to make our calling and election sure.

After Jesus had finished these discourses, he continued his journey towards Jerusalem, where the chief priests and elders, soon after the resurrection of Lazarus, issued a proclamation, promising a reward to any one who should apprehend him. In all probability, this was the reason why the disciples were astonished at the alacrity of our Lord, during this journey, while they themselves followed him trembling. Jesus, therefore, thought proper to repeat the prophecies concerning his sufferings, in order to show his disciples that they were entirely voluntary; adding, that though the Jews should put him to death, yet, instead of weakening, it should increase their faith, especially

as he would rise again, the third day, from the dead. "Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished: For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge him, and put him to death; and the third day he shall rise again." *Luke*, xviii. 32, 33.

As this prediction manifestly tended to the confirmation of the ancient prophecies, it must have given the greatest encouragement to his disciples had they understood and applied it in a proper manner: but they were so ignorant in the Scriptures, they had no idea of what he meant. "And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them; neither knew they the things which were spoken."

The sons of Zebedee were so ignorant, that they thought their Master, by his telling them he would rise again from the dead, meant that he would then erect his empire, and accordingly begged that he would confer on them the chief posts in his kingdom; which they expressed by desiring to be seated, the "one on his right hand, and the other on his left," in allusion to his placing the twelve apostles upon twelve thrones, judging the tribes of Israel.

This race, ever since our Saviour's transfiguration, had conceived very high notions of his kingdom, and possibly of their own merit also, because they had been permitted to behold that miracle. But Jesus told them they were ignorant of the nature of the honor they requested; and since they desired to share with him in glory, asked them if they were willing to share with him also in his sufferings. "Ye know not what ye ask; are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" *Matt.* xx. 22.

The two disciples, ravished with the prospect of the dignity they were aspiring after, replied without hesitation, that they were both able and willing to share any hardship their Master might meet with, in the way to the kingdom. To which he answered that they should certainly share with him his troubles and afflictions; but that they had asked a favor which was not his to give. "Ye shall drink, indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with; but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given unto them for whom it is prepared by my Father." *Matt.* xx. 23.

This ambitious request of the two brothers raised the indignation of the rest of the disciples, who, thinking themselves equally deserving the principal posts in the Messiah's kingdom, were highly offended at the arrogance of the sons of Zebedee.

Jesus, therefore, in order to restore harmony among his disciples, told them that his kingdom was very different from those of the present world, and the greatness of his disciples did not like that of secular princes, consist in reigning over others in an absolute and despotic manner. "Ye know, that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." *Matt.* xx. 25, &c. Ye know that rank and precedence denote merit of character here; but Christian greatness and spiritual precedence consist in humility, of which Christ your Saviour was made an eminent pattern.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The benevolent Saviour restores sight to the Blind.—Kindly regards Zaccheus the Publican.—Delivers the Parable of the Servants entrusted with their Lord's money.—Accepts the kind offices of Mary.—Makes a public entry into Jerusalem.

Jesus, with his disciples, and the multitude that accompanied him, were now arrived at Jericho, a famous city of Palestine, and the second in the kingdom. Near this town Jesus cured two blind men, who sat by the road begging, and expressed their belief in him as the Messiah. "And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And behold two blind men, sitting by the way-side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David. And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace; but they cried the more, saying, have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David." *Matt.* xx. 29, &c.

This importunate request had its desired effect on the Son of God. He stood still, and called them to him, that by their manner of walking, spectators might be convinced they were really blind. As soon as they approached him, he asked them, What they requested with such earnestness? To which the beggars answered, That they might receive their sight. "What will ye that I shall do unto you?" They say, "Lord, that our

eyes may be opened." This request was not made in vain; their compassionate Saviour touched their eyes, and immediately they received sight, and followed him, glorifying and praising God.

After conferring sight on these beggars, Zaccheus, chief of the publicans, having often heard the fame of our Saviour's miracles, was desirous of seeing his person; but the lowness of his stature preventing him from satisfying his curiosity, "he ran before, and climbed up a sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way." As Jesus approached the place where he was, "he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste, and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house." *Luke*, xix. 5.

The publican expressed his joy at our Lord's condescending to visit him, took him to his house, and showed him all the marks of civility in his power. But the people, when they saw he was going to the house of a publican, condemned his conduct, as not conformable to the character of a prophet. Zaccheus seems to have heard these unjust reflections; and, therefore, was willing to justify himself, before Jesus and his attendants. "And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him four-fold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham." *Luke*, xix. 8, &c.

Our Saviour further to convince the people that the design of his mission was to seek and to restore life and salvation to lost and perishing sinners, adds, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

While Jesus continued in the house of Zaccheus the publican, he spake a parable to his followers, who supposed, at his arrival in the royal city, he would erect the long-expected kingdom of the Messiah. "A certain nobleman," said he, "went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant; because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said

likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin; for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou laidst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore, then, gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds, (and they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those, mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me." *Luke*, xix. 12, &c.

In this parable we have the characters of three sorts of men, delineated by our blessed Saviour himself; namely, the true disciples of the Messiah; the hypocrites, and the openly profane. And the treatment these servants met with, represent the final sentences that will be passed upon them, by the awful Judge of the whole earth. The true disciples shall be rewarded with the honors and pleasures of immortality; the hypocrites stripped of all the advantages they so often boasted, and loaded with eternal infamy; and the open enemies of Christ shall suffer punishment, severe in proportion to the degree of their guilt.

But though this is the general sense of the parable, yet it has also a particular relation to the time when it was spoken; and was intended to teach the disciples, that though they might imagine the Messiah's kingdom was speedily to be erected, and they were soon to partake of its happiness, yet this was not to happen before the death of their Master; that they themselves must perform a long and laborious course of services, before they received their eternal reward. That after his resurrection, when he had obtained the kingdom, he would return from his seat of majesty, and reckon with all his servants, and reward every one according to the improvements he had made in the trust committed to his care: and that he would execute, in an exemplary manner, his vengeance on those who refused to let him reign over them, and did all in their power to hinder the erection of his kingdom among others.

After speaking this parable, Jesus left the house of Zaccheus the publican, and continued his journey towards Jerusalem, where he proposed to celebrate the passover: he was earnestly expected by the people, who came up to purify themselves,

and who began to doubt whether he would venture to come to the feast. This delay, however, was occasioned by the proclamation issued by the chief priests, promising a reward to any who would discover the place of his retirement. "Now both the chief priests and the pharisees had given a commandment, that if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him." *John*, xi. 57.

Six days before the passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, and repaired to the house of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. "There they made him a supper, and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone; against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always." *John*, xii. 2, &c.

As Bethany was not above two miles from Jerusalem, the news of his arrival was soon spread through the capital, and great numbers of the citizens came to seek Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead, together with the great prophet, who had wrought so stupendous a miracle, and many of them were convinced both of the resurrection of the former, and the divinity of the latter: but the news of their conversion, together with the reason of it, being currently reported in Jerusalem, the chief priests were soon sensible of the weight so great a miracle must have on the minds of the people; and therefore determined, if possible, to put both Jesus and Lazarus to death.

Our blessed Lord, though he knew the design of the Jews upon him, also knew that it became him to fulfil all righteousness, and was so far from declining to visit Jerusalem, that he even entered it in a public manner. When they "were come to Bethpage unto the Mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go unto the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, the Lord hath need of them and straightway he will send them. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy king cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of

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"And they brought the ass and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees and strewed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."—MATT. xxi. 7—9.

an ass. And the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosannah to the son of David: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosannah in the highest. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." *Matt.* xx. 1—3, &c.

Some of the most strenuous of the deistical tribe have endeavored to turn this circumstance into ridicule: but in this they discover the height of ignorance, because they judge by the prejudices of our own times and country. And when those who look no farther than the manners and customs before them, examine this part of the sacred history by the standard of modern prejudices, they see, or think they see, something quite inconsistent with the gravity and dignity of the person, pretending to be king of the Jews, when Christ is represented entering in triumph into Jerusalem, sitting on an ass. But however contemptible an ass, or a man riding on that creature, may be at present, it was not so from the beginning. In many countries, and particularly in Judea, persons of the highest distinction usually rode upon asses. The governors of Israel are described in the songs of Deborah, as "riding on white asses." *Judges*, v. 10. And the thirty sons of Jair, who was judge and prince over Israel twenty-two years, are said to ride on thirty ass-colts. *Judges*, x. 4. And another judge is recorded to have had forty sons and thirty nephews, that rode on seventy ass-colts. *Judges*, xii. 14.

It may, however, be asked, supposing it was an usual thing to ride on an ass, why should this common practice be mentioned in relation to the Messiah, as a mark of distinction? Might not the prophet, upon this supposition, as well have said, He shall come walking on foot? And would he not have been as well known by one character as by the other? Besides, if we turn to the book of Zechariah, where this prophecy is to be found, we shall see the person there described to be a king; a just king, and one having salvation: and what is there in this character of riding on the back of an ass, that is peculiar to a king, to a just king, and to one who was to bring salvation and deliverance to his people?

These questions, however difficult they at first sight may appear, are easily answered, not by considering the state and condition of kings in general, but that peculiar to a king of Israel, on which the propriety of this character is founded.

If we look into the history of the rise and fall of nations, we shall generally find, that their prosperity and success were proportioned to the force and power, and to the conduct and abilities of their leaders. But with the Jews, who, from slaves in Egypt, became a powerful people, the case was very different. The best and greatest of their kings, and he who carried their empire to its greatest height, has left us another account of their affairs; "The people," says he, "got not the land in possession by their own swords, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favor unto them." *Psal.* xliv. 3, &c.

When we read these, and other similar passages, we are apt to ascribe them to the piety and devotion of the psalmist, to consider them only as acknowledgments of God's general providence in the affairs of the world, and hence are apt to overlook, or not sufficiently consider, the historical truths they contain.

It is true, indeed, that all success, in the strictest sense, should be ascribed to God; that it is he who giveth victory unto kings; but he generally makes use of natural means, and it is no offence to his providence, that kings list their thousands of horse and foot, to secure themselves and their dominions. But with the Jews it was very different: they were never so weak, as when they made themselves strong; never so certainly ruined, as when their force was great enough to create a confidence in themselves. For God had taken the defence of Israel upon himself; and whenever the people took it out of his hands, to place it in their own, they were sure to be undone.

Nay, so tender was God of his honor, in this respect, and so concerned to justify his promise to protect Israel, in the eyes of the world, that he would not always permit natural causes to interfere in their deliverance, lest the people should grow doubtful to whom they ought to ascribe their victories; and for the same reason it was, that he commanded the people to have neither horses nor chariots of war for their defence. Not because they were thought useless in war, for it is well known they were the strength of the ancient kingdoms, but because God himself had undertaken their defence, and he wanted neither horse nor foot to fight their battles.

This law, as is evident from the Jewish history, was observed for near four hundred years, namely, till about the middle of Solomon's reign. And while David swayed the sceptre of Israel, when the kingdom was carried to its utmost height, he himself rode upon a mule, and provided no better equipage for his son, on the day of his coronation. "Cause Solomon, my son," said David, "to ride upon my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon. And let Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, anoint him there king over Israel." 1 *Kings*, i. 33, 34. And

when that pious prince looked back, and contemplated this state of things, he might well say, "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." *Psal.* xx. 7.

In the reign of Solomon things quickly changed their aspect. He married the daughter of the king of Egypt, and opened a commerce between that country and his own, by which means he soon acquired an immense number of horses and chariots; and all his successors, when they had it in their power, followed his example. But what did the kingdom gain by this change? They were before a rich and flourishing people: but after breaking this law of the Most High, their wealth and power gradually declined, till at last their habitations were laid waste, their temple and cities burnt with fire, and they themselves carried captive into a strange land.

It may, perhaps, be asked, wherein the guilt of having a country full of horses consisted? There is certainly no moral crime in purchasing and keeping these creatures: but the kings of Israel were exalted to the throne, on condition that they should renounce the assistance of chariots and horses, and depend upon God for success in the day of battle.

Having thus considered this law, and the consequences that resulted from the breach of it, let us now look back to the prophecy relating to the Messiah. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion: shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy king cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem." *Zech.* ix. 9, &c.

Such is the king who was to save the descendants of Jacob; and what sort of a king could be expected? Is it possible to imagine that God would send a king to save them who would be like the kings which had undone them? Is it not more reasonable to think, that he would resemble those who had been deliverers of their country? Kings who feared God, and therefore feared no enemy: who, though mounted on asses, and colts the foals of asses, were able to put to flight the thousands and ten thousands of chariots and horses that came against them.

The king, foretold by the prophet, was also to be just, meek, and lowly; but how could he have deserved that character had he appeared in the pride and pomp of war, surrounded with horses and chariots, in direct opposition to the law of God? or, as he was to bring salvation to the people, could he make use of those means which God had never prospered, and which he declared he never would?

It appears, then, that it was essential to the character of a king of Israel, who was to be just and lowly, and to bring sal-

vation with him, that he should come riding on an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass; but if any doubt can yet remain, let the prophet himself explain it, who immediately after the description of the promised king, adds, "and I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem:" plainly intimating, that the character given of the Messiah, that he should ride on an ass, was in opposition to the pride of their warlike kings, who, by their great strength in chariots and horses, had ruined themselves and their people.

Thus have we undeniably shown the intention of the prophet when he foretold, that the Messiah should ride on an ass; and from hence it appears, that the enemies of revelation have not the least reason for turning this transaction into ridicule. Was it any reproach to Christ to ride into Jerusalem on the foal of an ass, when David, the greatest of his ancestors, and Solomon, the wisest, as long as he was wise, rode in the same manner? Can the Jews object to this circumstance, and yet talk of the glories of David, and the magnificence of Solomon, who, in the midst of all that glory and magnificence, did the very same thing? Or can they stumble at this character of the Messiah, without forgetting by what princes their ancestors were saved, and by what undone?

But to leave this digression. The prodigious multitude that now accompanied Jesus filled the pharisees and great men with malice and envy, because every method they had taken to hinder the people from following Jesus had proved ineffectual. "The pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after him." *John*, xii. 19.

But when our blessed Saviour drew near the city of Jerusalem, surrounded by the rejoicing multitude, notwithstanding the many affronts he had there received, he beheld the city, and with a divine generosity and benevolence, which nothing can equal, wept over it, and, in the most pathetic manner, lamented the calamities which he foresaw were coming upon it, because its inhabitants were ignorant of the time of their visitation. "If," said he, "thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side. And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another: because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." *Luke*, xix. 42, &c.

Behold here, ye wondering mortals, behold an example of generosity infinitely superior to any furnished by the heathen world! An example highly worthy for them to imitate and admire!

When Jesus, surrounded by the multitude, entered Jerusalem, the whole city was moved on account of the prodigious concourse of people that accompanied him, and their continued acclamations. Jesus rode immediately to the temple; but it being evening he soon left the city, to the great discouragement of the people, who expected he was immediately to have taken into his hands the reins of government. "And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the even-tide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve." *Mark*, xi. 11.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Jesus pronounces a curse upon the Fig-tree.—Expels the profaners of the temple.—Asserts his divine authority, and delivers two parables.

At the earliest dawn our blessed Saviour left Bethany to visit again the capital of Judea. And as he pursued his journey, he saw, at a distance, a fig-tree, which, from its fulness of leaves, promised abundance of fruit. The inviting object induced him to approach it, in expectation of finding figs, for he was hungry, and the season for gathering them was not yet arrived; but on his coming to the tree, he found it to be really barren; upon which the blessed Jesus said to it, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever." *Matt.* xxi. 19.

The action, which was purely emblematical, and prefigured the speedy ruin of the Jewish nation, on account of its unfruitfulness, under all the advantages it then enjoyed, has, by the enemies of revelation, been represented as an action unbecoming the Redeemer of mankind. But if they had fully considered its intention they would have been convinced, that, like the rest of his miracles, it was done with a gracious intention; namely, to waken his countrymen from their lethargy, and, by repentance, prevent the total ruin of their church and nation.

Being disappointed in finding fruit on the fig-tree, our blessed Saviour pursued his journey to Jerusalem; and, on his arrival, went straightway to the temple, the outer court of which he found full of merchandise. A sight like this vexed his meek and righteous soul, so that he drove them all out of the temple, overturned the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and would not suffer any vessel to be carried through the temple, "saying unto them, It is written, My house

is the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves." *Luke*, xix. 46.

St. Jerome considers this as one of the greatest of our Saviour's transactions. And it must be owned that the circumstances are very extraordinary; that one man should undertake so bold and execute so hazardous a task. One man, without a commission from Cæsar; without any countenance from the Jewish rulers; without any arms either to terrify the multitude or defend himself. That he should cast out the whole tribe of mercenary traffickers, wrest from those worshippers of wealth, their darling idol; and trample it under foot: and all this without tumult or opposition: not one of the sacrilegious rabble daring to move the hand or open the mouth.

Whoever, I say, reflects on the fierce and ungovernable nature of an enraged populace, or considers the outrageous zeal of Demetrius, and the craftsmen, on a less irritating occasion, may possibly find himself almost, if not altogether of the Latin father's opinion.

There is a tradition, that a certain bright and dazzling lustre flamed from his eyes, which they were unable to bear, as the people could not behold the face of Moses, for the glory that surrounded him. But as the Scriptures take no notice of this transcendent lustre, we must only adore the greatness of the fact, and, at the same time, so improve this miracle to our spiritual advantage, as to secure, by accepting his grace, the power of this mighty reformer in our favor, that when he shall come in glory, we may be safe under the shadow of his divine wings, while he takes fearful vengeance on those, who prostitute the most sacred places to mercenary purposes.

Having dispersed this venal tribe, the people brought unto him the blind, the lame, and the diseased, who were all healed by the Son of God; so that the very children, when they saw the many miraculous cures he performed, proclaimed him to be the great Son of David, the long expected Messiah.

Such behaviour not a little incensed the pharisees: but they feared the people, and therefore only asked him, if he heard what the children said? insinuating, that he ought to rebuke them, and not suffer them thus to load him with the highest praises. But Jesus, instead of giving a direct answer to their question, repeated a passage out of the eighth Psalm. "Have ye never read," said the blessed Jesus, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast ordained strength?" Giving them to understand, that the meanest of God's works have been made instrumental in spreading his praise.

The evening being now come, Jesus, with his disciples, left the city and retired to Bethany, where his benevolent miracle, in raising Lazarus from the dead had procured him many

friends among whom he was always in safety. The next morning, as they were returning to Jerusalem, the disciples were astonished at beholding the fig-tree that had been, but the morning before, declared barren, "dried up from the roots:" they had, in all probability, forgotten what our Saviour had said to this fig-tree, till its dry and withered aspect brought it again to their memory. Peter, on seeing this astonishing phenomenon, said unto Jesus, "Master, behold the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away!" To which Jesus answered, that whosoever had faith in the Almighty, or thoroughly believed in his miracles, should be able to do much greater things than the withering of the fig-tree. "And Jesus answering, saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith." *Mark*, xi. 22, 23.

Our Lord added, that whatsoever they should ask by faith, they should receive; and concluded by giving them directions concerning prayer, which was necessary to increase the faith he mentioned. "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." *Mark*, xi. 25, 26.

During the time the blessed Jesus remained in the temple, certain proselyted Greeks, who came up to worship at Jerusalem, desired to see him, having long cherished expectations of beholding the promised Messiah. Accordingly, they applied to Philip, a native of Bethsaida, who mentioned it to Andrew, and he told it to Jesus. Upon which our blessed Saviour told his disciples, that he should soon be honoured with the conversion of the Gentiles: "The hour is come," said he, "that the Son of man should be glorified." But declared, that before this glorious event happened, he must suffer death: illustrating the necessity there was of his dying, by the similitude of casting grain into the earth. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." *Luke*, xii. 24. Adding, that since it was absolutely necessary for him, their Lord and Master, to suffer the pains of death before he ascended the throne of his glory; so they, as his followers, must also expect to be persecuted and spitefully used for his name's sake; but if they persevered, and even resolved to lose their lives in his service, he would reward their constancy with a crown of glory. At the same time he intimated, that the strangers, if their desire of conversing with him proceeded from a hope of obtaining

from him temporal preferments, would find themselves sadly disappointed. "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me, him will my Father honor." *John*, xii. 26.

Our blessed Lord was now so affected, that he uttered, in a very pathetic manner, his grief, and addressed his heavenly Father for succor in distress. "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour." *John*, xii. 27.

This should teach us, that prayer is the only method of easing the mind overwhelmed with distress: but at the same time to be always resigned to the divine will; for though the weakness of human nature may shrink when persecution or sufferings of any kind appear, yet, by reflecting on the wisdom, goodness, and power of God to deliver us, we ought to support every trial, however severe, with patience, as he doubtless proposes some happy end by these afflictions.

Our blessed Lord having made a short prayer to his Father, begged him to demonstrate the truth of his mission by some token which could not be resisted. "Father, glorify thy name." Nor had he hardly uttered these words, before he was answered by an audible voice from heaven, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." The miracles thou hast already performed have glorified my name; and I will still continue to glorify it by other miracles to be wrought before the sons of men.

This voice was evidently preternatural, resembling thunder in loudness, but sufficiently articulate to be understood by those who heard our blessed Saviour pray to his heavenly Father. And Jesus told his disciples that it was not given for his sake, but to confirm them in their faith of his mission. "This voice," said he, "came not because of me, but for your sakes." It came to confirm what I have told you relating to my sufferings, death, resurrection, and the conversion of the Gentile world to the Christian religion.

Accordingly, he communicated this comfortable reflection to his disciples; telling them that the time was at hand, when the kingdom of Satan should be destroyed, and that of the Messiah exalted. "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." *John*, xii. 31, &c.

The people, not understanding the force of this affirmation, replied, "We have heard, out of the law, that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, the Son of man must be lifted up?" *John*, xii. 34. Our Lord, in answer, told them, that they should soon be deprived of his presence and miracles; and, therefore, they would do well to listen attentively to his pre-

cepts, firmly believe the doctrine he delivered, and wisely improve them to their eternal advantage; for otherwise they would be soon overtaken with spiritual blindness, and rendered incapable of inheriting the promises of the Gospel. That while they enjoyed the benefit of his preaching and miracles, which sufficiently proved the truth of his mission from the Most High, they should believe on him; for by that means alone they could become the children of God. "Yet a little while is the light with you; walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." *John*, xii. 35, &c.

Having thus addressed the multitude he retired privately. But notwithstanding the many miracles our great Redeemer had wrought in presence of these perverse and stiff-necked people, the generality of them refused to own him for the Messiah; being filled with the vain expectations of a temporal prince, who was to rule over all the kingdoms of the earth, and place his throne in Jerusalem. Some, indeed, even of the rulers, believed on him, though they thought it prudent to conceal their faith, lest they should, like the blind man, be excommunicated, or put out of the synagogue; valuing the good opinion of men above the approbation of the Almighty.

Nevertheless, to inspire such as believed on him with courage, he cried in the temple, "He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me." *John*, xii. 44. He that acknowledges the divinity of my mission, acknowledges the power and grace of God, on whose special errand I am thus sent. Adding, he that seeth the miracles I perform, seeth the operations of that Omnipotent Power by which I act. I am the Sun of righteousness, whose beams dispel the darkness of ignorance in which the sons of men are involved, and am come to deliver all who believe on me out of that palpable darkness. You must not, however, expect, that I will at present execute my judgment upon those who refuse to embrace the doctrines of the Gospel; for I am not come to condemn and punish, but to save the world, and consequently to try every gentle and winning method to reclaim the wicked from the error of their ways, and turn their feet into the paths of life and salvation. They shall not, however, escape unpunished, who neglect the instructions and offers of salvation now made to them; for the doctrines I have preached shall bear witness against them at the awful tribunal of the last day; and as it has aggravated their sin, so shall it then heighten their punishment.

While Jesus was thus preaching in the temple, a deputation of priests and elders was sent from the supreme council, to ask him concerning the nature of the authority by which he acted

whether it was a prophet, priest, or king, as no other person had a right to make any alterations, either in church or state? And if he laid claim to either of those characters, from whom he received it? But our blessed Saviour, instead of giving a direct answer to the questions of the pharisees, asked them another; promising, if they resolved his question, he would also answer theirs. "I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?" *Matt.* xxi. 24, &c.

This question puzzled the priests. They considered, on the one hand, that if it was from God, it would oblige them to acknowledge the authority of Jesus, John having, more than once, publicly declared him to be the Messiah; and on the other, if they peremptorily denied the authority of John, they would be in danger of being stoned by the people, who, in general, considered him as a prophet. They, therefore, thought it the most eligible method to answer, that they could not tell from whence John's baptism was.

Thus, by declining to answer the question asked them by Jesus, they left him at liberty to decline giving the council the satisfaction they had sent to demand. At the same time they plainly confessed that they were unable to pass any opinion on John the Baptist, notwithstanding he claimed the character of a messenger from God, and they had sent to examine his pretensions. This was, in effect, to acknowledge that they were incapable of judging of any prophet whatsoever. Well, therefore, might the blessed Jesus say, "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." You have no right to ask, since you have confessed you are unable to judge; and, therefore, I shall not satisfy your inquiry.

But because this deputation had said, that they were ignorant from whence the baptism of John was, our blessed Saviour sharply rebuked them, conveying his reproof in the parable of the two sons commanded to work in their father's vineyard, and by asking their opinion of the two, made them condemn themselves.

"A certain man," said he, "had two sons, and he came to the first and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." But this ungracious youth very roughly answered the kind command of his father, and without the least preface, or appellation of respect, answered, "I will not." However, after reflecting on the impropriety and indecency of such behaviour to his kind and indulgent father, he repented of what he had done, and went to work in the vineyard. The father having met with so sharp a reply from the former son, had recourse to the other, and in the same manner ordered him to work that day in his vineyard.

This son was very different from the former, and, in a very dutiful manner, said, "I go, Sir." But notwithstanding this seeming obedience, he delayed to do as his father desired; he did not go to work in the vineyard. The temper and behaviour of this second son were exactly conformable to that of the pharisees. They gave the Almighty the most honorable titles, and professed the utmost zeal for his service, in their prayers and praises; but at the same time refused to do any part of the work that he enjoined them. In the character of the other son, the disposition of the publicans and harlots is well described. They neither professed or promised to do the will of their Creator; but when they came to reflect seriously on their conduct, and the offers of mercy which were so kindly made them, they submitted to our Saviour, and, in consequence of their faith, amended their lives.

Having thus finished the parables, our Lord asked the pharisees, "Whether of them twain did the will of his Father? They say unto him, The first." They did not immediately perceive, that by this answer they condemned themselves, till our Saviour made a just application of the parable, in this sharp but just rebuke, "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not," nor entered into your Father's vineyard, though, like the second son, you promised in the most fair and candid manner; "but the publicans and harlots believed him," repented of their former disobedience, and entered into the vineyard.

The blessed Jesus did not only rebuke them for rejecting the preaching of the Baptist, but represented the crime of the nation, in rejecting all the prophets which had been sent since they became a nation, among the rest, the only begotten Son of the Most High; warning them at the same time, of their danger, and the punishment that would inevitably ensue, if they continued in their rebellion. The outward economy of religion in which they gloried, would be taken from them; their relation to God, as his people, cancelled; and the national constitution destroyed: but because these topics were extremely disagreeable, he delivered them under the veil of the following parable: "There was," said he, "a certain householder which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country."

The comparison of the church to a vineyard is frequent in the sacred Scripture, but this particular parable, for the fuller conviction of the Jews is expressly taken from the fifth chapter of the prophet Isaiah, with which they could not fail of be-

ing well acquainted nor ignorant of its meaning, as the prophet at the end of it adds, "The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression: for righteousness, but behold a cry." Our Saviour, therefore, continued the metaphor, telling them, "that when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another." The Almighty sent the prophets to exhort the Jews to entertain just sentiments of religion, and tread the paths of virtue; but the Jews irritated at the prophets for the freedom they used in reproving their sins, persecuted and slew them with unrelenting fury.

Their wickedness, however, in killing these messengers, did not instantly provoke the Almighty to pour down his vengeance upon them: he sent more prophets to exhort and reclaim them, but they met with no better fate than the former. His mercy, however, still continued, and that no means might be left untried, he sent unto them his own Son, whose authority being clearly established by undeniable miracles, ought to have been acknowledged cheerfully by these wicked men; but how different was the consequence! "When the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the Lord, therefore, of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their season." *Matt.* xxi. 58, &c.

Shocked at this awful representation, the pharisees exclaimed, and said, "God forbid;" surely these husbandmen will not proceed to such desperate iniquity; surely the vineyard will not thus be taken from them. But to confirm the truth of this, our Saviour added a remarkable prophecy of himself, and his rejection, from the 118th Psalm. "Did you never," said he, "read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders refused, is become the head-stone of the corner; this is the Lord's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes?"

The rejection of the Messiah by the Jews, and the reception he met with among the Gentiles, all brought to pass by the providence of God, are wonderful events; and therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

The chief priests and pharisees being afraid to apprehend Jesus, he was at liberty to proceed in the offices of his ministry;

accordingly he delivered another parable, wherein he described, on the one hand, the bad success which the preaching of the Gospel was to meet with among the Jews; and on the other, the cheerful reception given it among the Gentiles. This gracious design of the Almighty, in giving the Gospel to the children of men, our blessed Saviour illustrated by the behaviour of a certain king, who in honor of his son, made a great feast, to which he invited many guests. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son." This marriage supper, or great feast, signifies the joys of heaven, which are properly compared to an elegant entertainment, on account of their exquisiteness and duration; and are here said to be prepared in honor of the Son of God, because they are bestowed on men in consequence of his sufferings in their stead and behalf.

Some time before the supper was ready, the servants went forth to call the guests to the wedding: i. e. when the fulness of time approached, the Jews, as being the peculiar people of God, were first called by John the Baptist, and afterwards by Christ himself; but they refused all these benevolent calls of mercy, and rejected the kind invitations of the Gospel, though pressed by the preaching of the Messiah, and his forerunner. After our Saviour's resurrection and ascension, the apostles were sent forth to inform the Jews, that the Gospel-covenant was established, mansions in heaven prepared, and nothing wanting but the cheerful acceptance of the honor designed them. "Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage." But these messengers were as unsuccessful as the former. The Jews, undervaluing the favor offered them, mocked at the message; and some of them, more rude than the rest, insulted, beat, and slew the servants that had been sent to call them to the marriage supper of the Lamb. "But when the king heard thereof he was wroth; and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city." This part of the parable plainly predicted the destruction of the Jews, by the Roman armies, called here the armies of the Almighty, because they were appointed by him to execute vengeance on that once favored but now rebellious people.

The parable is then continued as follows: The king again sent forth his servants into the countries of the Gentiles, with orders to compel all that they met with to come in to the marriage. This was immediately done, and the wedding was furnished with guests; but when the king came into the apartment, "he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment; and

he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen." *Matt.* xxii. 11, &c.

By the conclusion of the parable, we learn that the profession of the Christian religion will not save a man unless he acts from Christian principles. Let us, therefore, who have obeyed the call, and are by profession the people of God, think often on that awful day, when the king will come in to see his guests, when the Almighty will, with the greatest strictness, view every soul that lays claim to the joys of heaven. Let us think of the speechless confusion that will seize such as have not on the wedding garment, and of the inexorable anxiety with which they will be consigned to weeping and gnashing of teeth: and let us remember, that to have seen for awhile, the light of the Gospel, and the fair beamings of an eternal hope, will add deeper and more sensible horrors to these gloomy caverns. On the other hand, to animate and encourage us, let us anticipate the joyful hour which will consign us to bliss immortal.

CHAPTER XXX.

The blessed Jesus wisely retorts on the Pharisees and Herodians, who propound an intricate question to him.—Settles the most important point of the law.—Enforces his Mission and Doctrine, and foretels the Judgment that would fall upon the Pharisaical tribe.

This representation of the state of the finally impenitent, appearing to be levelled at the pharisees, they immediately concerted with the Herodians and Sadducees, on the most proper method of putting Jesus to death. It is sufficiently evident, that their hatred was now carried to the highest pitch, because the most violent enmity which had so long subsisted between the two sects, was, on this occasion, suspended, and they joined together, to execute their cruel determination on the Son of God. They, however, thought it most eligible to act very cautiously, and endeavor, if possible, to catch some hasty expression from him, that they might render him odious to the people, and procure something against him that might serve

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"And he sent his servant at supper-time, to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse."—LUKE XIV. 17, 18.

as a basis for a persecution. Accordingly, they sent some of their disciples to him, with orders to feign themselves just men, who maintained the greatest veneration for the divine law, and dreaded nothing more than the doing any thing inconsistent with its precepts: and, under this specious cloak of hypocrisy, to beg his determination of an affair that had long lain heavy on their consciences; namely, the paying tribute to Cæsar, which they thought inconsistent with their zeal for religion. This question was, it seems, furiously debated in our Saviour's time; one Judas, a native of Galilee, having implanted in the minds of the people a notion that taxes to a foreign power were absolutely unlawful. A doctrine so pleasing to the worldly-minded Jews, could not fail of friends, especially among the lower class, and therefore must have many partisans among the multitude that then surrounded the Son of God. The priests therefore imagined, that it was not in his power to decide the point, without rendering himself obnoxious to some of the parties: if he should say it was lawful to pay the taxes, they believed that the people, in whose hearing the question was proposed, would be incensed against him, not only as a base pretender, who, on being attacked, publicly renounced the character of the Messiah, which he had assumed among his friends, but also as a flatterer of princes, and a betrayer of the liberties of his country, one who taught a doctrine inconsistent with the known privileges of the people of God; but if he should affirm that it was unlawful to pay tribute, they determined to inform the governor, who they hoped would punish him as a former of sedition. Highly elated with their project, they accordingly came; and after passing an encomium on the truth of his mission, his courage, and impartiality, they proposed this famous question, "Master," said they, "we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth." Tell us, therefore, what thinkest thou, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not." *Mark*, xii. 14.

But the blessed Jesus saw their secret intentions, and accordingly called them hypocrites, to signify that though they made conscience, and a regard for the divine will, their pretence for proposing this question, he saw through the thin veil that concealed their design from the eyes of mortals, and knew that their intention was to ensnare him.

He, however, did not decline answering this question, but previously desired to see a piece of the tribute money. The piece was accordingly produced, and proved to be coined by the Romans. Upon which our blessed Saviour answered them, since this money bears the image of Cæsar, it is his, and by making use of it, you acknowledge his authority. But at the

same time that you discharge your duty to the civil magistrate, you should never forget the duty you owe to your God; but remember, that as you bear the image of the great, the Omnipotent King, you are his subjects, and ought to pay him the tribute of yourselves, serving him to the very utmost of your power.

The pharisees and their followers, under a pretence of religion, often justified sedition; but the Herodians, in order to ingratiate themselves with the reigning powers, made them a compliment of their consciences, complying with whatever they enjoined, however opposite their commands might be to the divine law. Our Lord, therefore, adapted his answer to them both, exhorting them, in their regards to God and the magistrate, to give each his due; there being no inconsistency between their rights, when their rights only are insisted on.

So unexpected an answer quite disconcerted and silenced these crafty enemies. They were astonished, both at his having discovered their design, and his wisdom in avoiding the snare they had so artfully laid for him. "When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way." *Matt.* xxii. 22.

Though our Lord thus wisely obviated their crafty designs, enemies came against him from every quarter. The Sadducees, who denied the doctrine of a future state, together with the existence of angels and spirits, came forward to the charge; proposing to him their strongest argument against the resurrection, which they deduced from the law given by Moses, with regard to marriage. "Master," said they, "Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. There were therefore, seven brethren; and the first took a wife, and died without children. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also. And they left no children, and died. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife." *Luke*, xx. 28, &c.

The Sadducees, who believed the soul to be nothing more than a refined matter, were persuaded that if there was any future state, it must resemble the present: and that being in that state material and mortal, the human race could not be continued, nor the individuals rendered happy, without the pleasures and conveniences of marriage. And hence considered it as a necessary consequence of the doctrine of the resurrection, or a future state, that every man's wife should be restored to him.

But this argument our blessed Saviour soon confuted, by telling the pharisees they were ignorant of the power of God, who had created spirit, as well as matter, and who can render man completely happy in the enjoyment of himself. He also observed, that the nature of the life obtained in a future state made marriage altogether superfluous, because in the world to come, men being spiritual and immortal, like the angels, there was no need of natural means to propagate or continue the kind. "Ye do err," said the blessed Jesus, "not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage." *Matt.* xxii. 29, 30. "Neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." *Luke*, xx. 36. Hence we may observe, that good men are called the children of the Most High, from their inheritance at the resurrection, and particularly on account of their being adorned with immortality.

Having thus shown their folly and unbelief, he proceeded to show that they were also ignorant of the Scriptures, and particularly of the writings of Moses, from whence they had drawn their objection by demonstrating, from the very law itself, the certainty of a resurrection, at least that of just men, and consequently, quite demolished the opinion of the Sadducees, who, by believing the materiality of the soul, affirmed that men were annihilated at their death, and that their opinion was founded on the writings of Moses. "Now," said our Saviour, "that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him." *Luke*, xx. 37, 38. As if he had said, The Almighty cannot properly be called God, unless he has his people, and the Lord of the living. Since therefore, Moses called him the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, long after these venerable patriarchs were dead, the relation denoted by the word of God still subsisted between them: consequently they were not annihilated as you pretend, but are still in being, and continue to be the servants of the Most High.

This argument effectually silenced the Sadducees, and agreeably surprised the people, to see the objection hitherto thought impregnable totally abolished, and the sect they had long abominated fully confuted. "And when the multitude heard this they were astonished at his doctrine." *Matt.* xxii. 33.

Nor could even the pharisees refrain from giving the Saviour of mankind the praise due to his superlative wisdom; for one of the scribes desired him to give his opinion on a question often debated among their teachers; namely, which was the great

commandment of the law? The true reason for their proposing this question, was, to try whether he was as well acquainted with the sacred law, and the debates that had arisen on different parts of it, as he was in deriving arguments from the inspired writers, to destroy the tenets of those who denied a future state.

In order to understand the question proposed to our blessed Saviour by the scribe, it is necessary to observe, that some of the most learned rabbis had declared, that the law of sacrifices was the great commandment; some that it was the law of circumcision; and others that the law of meats and washings had merited that title.

Our blessed Saviour, however, showed that they were all mistaken; and that the great commandment of the law is the duty of piety: and particularly mentioned that comprehensive summary of it, given by Moses: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment." *Mark*, xii. 29, 30.

The first and chief commandment is, to give God our hearts. The divine Being is so trancendently amiable in himself, and hath, by the innumerable benefits conferred upon us, such a title to our utmost affection, that no obligation bears any proportion to that of loving him. The honor assigned to this precept proves, that piety is the noblest act of the human mind; and that the chief ingredient in piety is love, founded on a clear and extensive view of the divine perfections, a permanent sense of his benefits, and a deep conviction of his being the sovereign good, our portion and our happiness. But it is essential to love that there be a delight in contemplating the beauty of the object beloved, whether that beauty be matter of sensation or reflection: that we frequently, and with pleasure, reflect on the benefits conferred on us by the object of our affections; that we have a strong desire of pleasing him, great fear of doing any thing to offend him, and a sensible joy in thinking we are beloved in return. Hence the duties of devotion, prayer and praise, are the most natural and genuine exercises of the love of God. Nor is this virtue so much any single affection, as the continual bent of all the affections and powers of the soul: consequently, to love God is as much as possible to direct the whole soul towards him, and to exercise all its faculties on him as its chief object.

Accordingly the love of God is described in Scripture by the several operations of the mind, "a following hard after God," namely, by intense contemplation; a sense of his perfections, gratitude for his benefits, trust in his goodness, attach-

ment to his service, resignation to his providence, the obeying his commandments, admiration, hope, fear, joy, &c. not because it consists in any of those singly, but in them altogether; for to content ourselves with partial regards to the Supreme Being, is not to be affected towards him in the manner we ought to be, and which his perfections claim.

Hence the words of the precept are, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength;" that is, with the joint force of all thy faculties; and, therefore, no idol whatsoever must partake of the love and worship that is due to him. But the beauty and excellency of this state of mind is best seen in its effects; for the worship and obedience flowing from such an universal bent of the soul towards God, is as much superior to the worship and obedience arising from partial considerations, as the brightness of the sun is to any picture that can be drawn of that luminary.

For example, if we look upon God only as a stern lawgiver, who can and will punish our rebellion, it may indeed force an awe and dread of him, and as much obedience to his laws as we think will satisfy him, but can never produce that constancy in our duty, that delight in it, and that earnestness to perform it in its utmost extent, which are produced and maintained in the mind, by the sacred fire of divine love, or by the bent of the whole soul turned towards God, as a reconciled father; a frame the most excellent that can be conceived, and the most to be desired, because it constitutes the highest perfection and real happiness of the creature.

Again, this commandment requires us to fear God; and certainly we cannot love the Lord our God, unless we fear and reverence him; for as the love, so the fear of God, is the sum of all the commandments, and indeed the substance of all religion. Prayer and praise are the tribute and homage of religion; by the one we acknowledge our dependence upon God; by the other we confess that all our blessings and comforts are from him. Such, therefore, as neither pray to God, nor praise him, cannot be said to have a God; for they acknowledge none, but are gods to themselves; and as the love and fear of God are often used in Scripture for his whole worship and service, so is this invocation of his name; "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen, and upon the families that have not called upon thy name;" that is, those who do not worship or serve him.

But to return. Our blessed Saviour having thus answered the question put to him by the scribe, added that the second commandment was that which enjoined the love of our neighbor.

This had, indeed, no relation to the lawyer's question concerning the first commandment; yet our blessed Lord thought

proper to show him which was the second, probably because the men of his sect did not acknowledge the importance and precedence of love to their neighbors, or because they were remarkably deficient in the practice of it, as Jesus himself had often found in their attempts to kill him. "And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

This principle of love to God will be also fruitful of every good work. It will make us really perform the duties of all relations in which we stand. And because love worketh no ill to his neighbor, therefore it is the fulfilling of the law; for it will prompt us to a cheerful and ready performance of every office, whether of justice or charity, that we owe to our neighbor. All the best things we can do, if destitute of this principle, will appear to be either the effect of hypocrisy, or done to procure the esteem of men. Without love, a narrowness of soul will shut us up within ourselves, and make all we do to others only as a sort of merchandise, trading for our own advantage. It is love only that opens our hearts to consider other persons, and to love them on their own account, or rather on account of God, who is love.

Those who possess such a temper of mind have a constant calm within, and are not disturbed with passion, jealousy, envy, or ill-nature. They observe and rejoice in the happiness of others; they are glad to see them easy, and share with them in their joy and felicity; not fretting or complaining, though they enjoy less than their neighbors.

It is true, love has a very different effect; for the same temper will render many so considerate of the misfortunes of others, as to sympathize with them in their distress, and be greatly affected with such objects of compassion as it is not in their power to assist. But there is a real pleasure even in this compassion, as it melts us to the greatest tenderness, and proves us to be men and Christians. The good man, by the overflowings of his love, is sure that he is a favorite with his Maker, because he loves his neighbor. His soul dwells at ease; there is sweetness in all his thoughts and wishes. This makes him clear in his views of every kind, and renders him grateful to all around him.

This charitable temper also maintains in him a constant disposition for prayer. A charitable man, who has had occasion to forbear and forgive others, and to return good for evil, dares, with an humble assurance, to lay claim to mercy and pardon, through the merits alone of his blessed Redeemer.

But we return to the scribe, who was astonished at the justness of our Saviour's decisions, and answered, That he had determined rightly, since there is but one supreme God, whom we must all adore; and if we love him above all temporal

things, and our neighbor as ourselves, we worship him more acceptably than if we sacrifice to him "all the cattle upon a thousand hills."

Our blessed Lord highly applauded the piety and wisdom of this reflection, by declaring that the person who made it was not far from the kingdom of God.

As the pharisees, during the course of our Saviour's ministry, had proposed to him many difficult questions, with intent to prove his prophetical gifts, he now, in his turn, thought proper to make a trial of their knowledge in the sacred writings. For this purpose he asked their opinion of a difficulty concerning the Messiah's pedigree. "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David." *Matt.* xxii. 42. I know, answered Jesus, you say Christ is the son of David; but how can they support their opinion, or render it consistent with the words of David, who himself calls him Lord? and "how is he his son?" It seems the Jewish doctors did not imagine that their Messiah would be endowed with any perfections greater than those that might be enjoyed by human nature; for though they called him the Son of God, they had no notion that he had a divine power from heaven, and therefore could not pretend to solve the difficulty.

The latter question, however, might have convinced them of their error; for if the Messiah was only to be a secular prince, as they supposed, and to rule over the men of his own time, he could never have been called *Lord*, by persons who died before he was born; far less would so mighty a prince as David, who was also his progenitor, have conferred on him that title. Since, therefore, he rules over not only those of former ages, but even over the kings from whom he was himself descended, and his kingdom comprehends the men of all countries and times, past, present, and to come; the doctors, if they had thought accurately upon the subject, should have expected in their Messiah a king different from all other kings. Besides, he is to sit at God's right hand, "till all his enemies are made his footstool."

Such solid reasoning gave the people an high opinion of his wisdom; and showed them how far superior he was to their most renowned rabbis, whose arguments to prove their opinions and answers to the objections which were raised against them, were, in general, very weak and trifling. Nay, his foes themselves, from the repeated proofs they had received of the prodigious depth of his understanding, were impressed with such an opinion of his wisdom, that they judged it impossible to entangle him in his talk. Accordingly, they left off attempting it, and from that day forth troubled him no more with their insidious questions.

But having mentioned the final conquest and destruction of his enemies, who were to be made his footstool, agreeably to the prediction of the royal psalmist, he turned towards his disciples; and, in the hearing of the multitude, solemnly cautioned them to beware of the scribes and pharisees; insinuating thereby who the enemies were whose destruction he had mentioned. "The scribes and the pharisees," said he, "sit in Moses' seat. All, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe, and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say and do not." *Matt.* xxiii. 2, 3.

While they teach the doctrines before delivered by Moses, observe all they say; but by no means imitate their practices; for they impose many precepts on their disciples, which they never perform themselves. "For they bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen of men." *Matt.* xxiii. 4, 5.

The difficult precepts they impose on others are never regarded by these hypocrites, and any good action they may happen to perform is vitiated by the principle from whence it proceeds. They do it only with a view to gain popular applause, and not from a regard to God, far less from a love of goodness. They are proud and arrogant to excess, as is plain from their affected gravity in their clothes; from the anxiety they discover lest they should not obtain the principal seats in the public assemblies, and from their affecting to be saluted in the streets with the sounding titles of rabbi, and father. "They make broad their philacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments. And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, rabbi, rabbi." *Matt.* xxiii. 5—7.

The word *rabbi* signifies, properly, *great*, and was given to those men who had rendered themselves remarkable for the extent of their learning; it is therefore no wonder that the proud and supercilious pharisees were fond of a title, which so highly complimented their understandings, and gave them great authority with their followers.

But the disciples of the blessed Jesus were to decline this title; because the thing signified by it belonged solely to their Master, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and because they owed no part of their knowledge to themselves, but derived it entirely from him who came down from heaven. "But be not ye called rabbi; for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, which is in heaven." *Matt.* xxiii. 8, 9. Life, with all its blessings, comes

from God, and men wholly depend upon him; all praise and thankfulness, therefore, should ultimately be referred to him: so that if any one teacheth rightly, not the teacher, but the wisdom of the Almighty is to be praised, which exerts and communicates itself by him.

Nor were the disciples of our blessed Saviour to accept of the title of *master*, or *leader*, which the Jewish doctors also courted, because, in point of commission and inspiration, they were all equal, neither had they any title to rule the consciences of men, except by virtue of the inspiration which they had received from their Master, to whom alone the prerogative of infallibility belonged. "Neither be ye called masters; for one is your master, even Christ." *Matt.* xxiii. 10.

The divine teacher, however, did not intend by this to intimate, that it was sinful to call men by the stations they held in the world: he only intended to reprove the simplicity of the common people who loaded their teachers with praises, and forgot to ascribe any thing to God; and to root out of the minds of his apostles the pharisaical vanity, which decked itself with honor belonging solely to the Creator of the universe. Accordingly, that he might instil into their hearts humility to dispose them to do good offices to one another, as occasion offered, he assured them it was the only road to true greatness; for by assuming what did not properly belong to them, they should be despised both by God and men. Whereas those who did not disdain to perform the meanest offices of love to their brethren, should enjoy a high degree of the divine favor.

The above discourses greatly incensed the scribes and pharisees, as they were pronounced in the hearing of many of that order; it is therefore no wonder, that they watched every opportunity to destroy him. But this was not a time to put their bloody designs in execution; the people set too high a value on his doctrine, to suffer any violence to be offered to his person; and as this was the last sermon he was ever to preach in public, it was necessary that he should use some severity, as all his mild persuasions proved ineffectual.

He therefore denounced, in the most solemn manner, dreadful woes against them, not on account of the personal injuries he had received from them, but on account of their excessive wickedness.

They were public teachers of religion; and therefore should have used every method in their power to recommend its precepts to the people, and to have been themselves shining examples of every duty it enjoined: but, on the contrary, they abused every mark and character of goodness for all the purposes of villany, and under the cloak of a severe and sanctified

aspect, they were malicious, implacable, lewd, covetous, and rapacious. In a word, instead of being reformers, they were the corrupters of mankind, and consequently their wickedness deserved the greatest reproof that could be given by the great Redeemer of mankind. "Wo unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that were entering to go in. Wo unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Wo unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and, when he is made, ye make him two-fold more the child of hell than yourselves. *Matt.* xxiii. 13, &c.

The punishment you shall suffer will be terribly severe, because you have given a wrong interpretation of the ancient prophecies concerning the Messiah, and done all that is in your power to hinder the people from repenting of their sins, and believing the Gospel: because you have committed the grossest iniquities, and under the cloak of religion have devoured the substance of widows and orphans, hoping to hide your villanies by long prayers; because ye have expressed the greatest zeal imaginable in making proselytes, not with a view to render the Gentiles more wise and virtuous, but to acquire their riches, and a command over their consciences; and instead of teaching them the precepts of virtue, and the great duties of religion, you confine them to superstitious and ceremonial institutions; and hence they often relapse into their old state of heathenism, and become more wicked than before their conversion, and consequently liable to a more severe sentence.

He also exposed their doctrine concerning oaths: and declared, in opposition to their abominable tenets, that every oath, if the matter of it be lawful, is obligatory; because when men swear by any part of the creation, it is an appeal to the Creator himself; for in any other light an oath of this kind is absolutely ridiculous, the object having neither knowledge of the fact, nor power to punish the perjury. "Wo unto you, ye blind guides! which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple it is nothing: but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple he is a debtor. Ye fools and blind! for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And whosoever shall swear by the altar it is nothing, but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and blind! for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth

therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon." *Matt.* xxiii. 16, &c.

He likewise reprehended their superstitious practices, in observing the minutest parts of the ceremonial precepts of the law, and at the same time utterly neglecting the eternal and indispensable rules of righteousness. "Wo unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites: for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law,—judgment, mercy, and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." *Matt.* xxiii. 23, &c.

Their hypocrisy did not escape the censure of the Son of God; they spared no pains to appear virtuous in the eyes of the world, and maintain an external conduct that should acquire the praises of men, but at the same time neglected to adorn their souls with the robe of righteousness, which is the only ornament that can render them dear in the sight of their Maker. "Wo unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also." *Matt.* xxiii. 25. Cleanse first the mind, thy inward man, from evil dispositions and affections, and the outward behaviour will of course be virtuous and praiseworthy.

Moreover he animadverted upon the success of their hypocrisy. They deceived the simple and unthinking part of mankind, with their pretended sanctity, appearing like whited sepulchres, beautiful on the outside, while their internal parts were full of uncleanness. "Wo unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." *Matt.* xxiii. 27, 28.

He also reproved the pains they had taken in adorning the sepulchres of the prophets; because they pretended a great veneration for their memories, and even condemned their fathers, who killed them, saying, that if they had lived in the days of their fathers, they would have opposed such monstrous wickedness, while, at the same time, all their actions abundantly proved that they still cherished the same spirit they condemned in their fathers, persecuting the messengers of the Most High, particularly his only begotten Son, whom they were determined to destroy. "Wo unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites!

because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets." *Matt.* xxiii. 29, &c.

He added, that the divine Being was desirous of trying every method for their conversion, though all these instances of mercy were slighted, and that they must expect such terrible vengeance, as should be a standing monument of the divine displeasure against all the murders committed by the sons of men from the foundation of the world.

Having thus laid before them their heinous guilt and punishment, he was, at the thought of the calamities which were soon to fall upon them, exceedingly moved, and his breast filled with sensations of pity to such a degree, that, unable to contain himself, he brake forth into tears, bewailing the hard lot of the city of Jerusalem: for as its inhabitants had more deeply imbrued their hands in the blood of the prophets, they were to drink more deeply of the punishment due to such crimes. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate." *Matt.* xxiii. 37, &c.

This benevolent, as well as pathetic exclamation of our blessed Lord, cannot fail to excite in the pious mind the warmest emotions of love to the gracious Saviour of mankind, as well as pity for that once chosen, but since degenerate race. Now often had the Almighty called upon them to return from their evil way, before he sent his only begotten Son into the world? How often, how emphatically did the compassionate Jesus entreat them to embrace the merciful terms now offered them by the Almighty; and with what unconquerable obstinacy did they refuse the benevolent offers, and resist the most winning expressions of the divine love! By the word "house," our blessed Saviour meant the temple, which was from that time to be left unto them desolate; the glory of the Lord, which Haggai had prophesied should fill the second house, was now departing from it. Adding, "I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." *Matt.* xxiii. 39. As if he had said, As ye have killed the prophets, and persecuted me whom the Father hath sent from the courts of heaven, and will shortly put me, who am the Lord of the temple, to death, your holy house shall be left desolate, and your nation totally deserted by me; nor shall you see me any more till ye shall acknowledge the dignity of my

character, and the importance of my mission, and say with the whole earth, " Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Thus did the blessed Jesus strip the scribes and pharisees of their hypocritical mask. He treated them with severity, because their crimes were of the blackest dye: and hence we should learn to be really good, and not flatter ourselves that we can cover our crimes, with the cloak of hypocrisy, from that piercing eye from which nothing is concealed.

The people could not fail being astonished at these discourses, as they had always considered their teachers as the most righteous among the sons of men. Nay, the persons themselves, against whom they were levelled, were confounded, because their own consciences convinced them of the truth of every particular laid to their charge. They therefore knew not what course to pursue; and in the midst of their hesitation, they let Jesus depart without making any attempt to seize him, or inflict on him any kind of punishment.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Our Saviour commends even the smallest act, because it proceeded from a truly benevolent motive.—Predicts the demolition of the magnificent Temple of Jerusalem, and delivers several instructive Parables.

Jesus, the infallible preacher of righteousness, having thus exposed the secret practices of the scribes and pharisees, repaired with his disciples into the court of the women, called the treasury, from several chests being fixed to the pillars of the portico surrounding the court, for receiving the offerings of those who came to worship in the temple. While he continued in this court, " he beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury. For all they did cast in of their abundance: but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." *Mark*, xii. 41, &c.

Though the offering given by this poor widow was in itself very small, yet, in proportion to the goods of life she enjoyed,

't was remarkably large; for it was all she had, even all her living. In order, therefore, to encourage charity, and show that it is the disposition of the mind, not the magnificence of the offering, that attaches the regard of the Almighty, the Son of God applauded this poor widow, as having given more, in proportion, than any of the rich. Their offerings, though great in respect of her's, were but a small part of their estates; whereas her offering was her whole stock. And from this passage of the Gospel we should learn, that the poor, who in appearance are denied the means of doing charitable offices, are encouraged to do all they can. For how small soever the gift may be, the Almighty, who beholds the heart, values it, not according to what it is in itself, but according to the disposition with which it is given.

On the other hand, we should learn from hence, that it is not enough for the rich that they exceed the poor in the gifts of charity; they should bestow in proportion to their income; and they would do well to remember, that a little given, where a little only is left, appears a much nobler offering in the sight of the Almighty, and discovers a more benevolent and humane temper of mind, than sums much larger bestowed out of a plentiful abundance.

The disciples now remembered that their Master, at the conclusion of his pathetic lamentation over Jerusalem, had declared that the temple should not any more be favored with his presence, till they should say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

A resolution of this kind could not fail of greatly surprising his disciples; and therefore, as he was departing from that sacred structure, they desired him to observe the beauty of the building; insinuating, that they thought it strange he should intimate an intention of leaving it desolate; that so glorious a fabric, celebrated in every corner of the earth, was not to be deserted rashly; and that they should think themselves supremely happy, when he, as the Messiah and descendant of David, should take possession of it, and erect his throne in the midst of Jerusalem. And as they went out of the temple, one of the disciples saith unto him, "Master, see what manner of stones, and what buildings are here."

The eastern wall of the temple, which fronted the mount of Olives, whither the disciples, with their Master, were then retiring, was built from the bottom of the valley to a prodigious height, with stones of an incredible bulk, firmly compacted together, and therefore made a very grand appearance, at a distance. The eastern wall is supposed to have been the only remains of Solomon's temple, and had escaped when the Chaldeans burnt it. But this building, however strong or costly it

appeared, our Saviour told them should be totally destroyed. "Seest thou," said he, "these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." *Mark*, xiii. 2.

That noble edifice, raised with much labor, and at a vast expense, shall be razed to the very foundation. The disciples, therefore, when they heard their Master affirm, that not so much as one of these enormous stones, which had withstood the fury of Nebuchadnezzar's army, and survived the destructive hand of time, was to be left one upon another, they perceived that the whole temple was to be demolished, but did not suspect that the sacrifices were to be taken away, and a new religion introduced, which rendered the temple unnecessary. They, therefore, flattered themselves, that the fabric then standing, however glorious it might appear, was too small for the numerous worshippers who would frequent it, when all the nations of the world were subject to the Messiah's kingdom, and was, therefore, to be pulled down, in order to be erected on a more magnificent plan, suitable to the idea they had conceived of his future empire. Filled with these pleasing imaginations, they received the news with pleasure, meditating, as they walked to the mountain, on the glorious things which were shortly to come to pass.

When they arrived on the Mount of Olives, and their Master had taken his seat on some eminence, from whence they had a prospect of the temple and a part of the city, his disciples drew near, to know when the demolition of the old structure was to happen, and what were to be the signs of his coming, and of the end of the world. "And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" *Matt.* xxiv. 3.

The disciples, by this request, seem desirous of knowing what signs should precede the erection of that extensive empire, over which they supposed the Messiah was to reign; for they still expected he would govern a secular kingdom. They, therefore, connected the demolition of the temple with their Master's coming, though they had not the least notion that he was to destroy the nation and change the form of religious worship.

They, therefore, meant, by "the end of the world," or, as the words should have been translated, "the end of the ages," the period of the political government then executed by heathen procurators; and considered their Master's coming to destroy the constitution then subsisting, as a very desirable event.—They also thought the demolition of the temple proper, as they expected a large and more superb building, proportioned to the

number of the Messiah's subjects, would be erected in its stead.

That this is the real sense of the disciples' question, will sufficiently appear, if we consider that the disciples were delighted with the prospect; whereas, if they had meant by the end of the world, the final period of all things, the destruction of the temple would have exhibited to them, in their present temper of mind, a melancholy prospect, which they could not have beheld without a deep concern.

Our blessed Saviour, therefore, was careful to convince them of their mistake, by telling them, that he was not come to rule a secular empire, as they supposed, but to punish the Jews for their perfidy and rebellion, by destroying both their temple and nation. "Take heed," said he, "that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many."

This caution was far from being unnecessary, because, though the disciples were to see their Master ascend into heaven, they might take occasion from the prophecy, to think that he would appear again on earth, and, therefore, be in danger of seduction by the false Christs that should arise. "And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled, for all these things must come to pass; but the end is not yet." Before this nation and temple are destroyed, terrible wars will happen in the land; "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places." *Matt.* xxiv. 7.

These are the preludes of the important event, forerunners of the evils which shall befall this nation and people. At the same time you shall meet with hot persecutions; walk, therefore, circumspectly, and arm yourselves both with patience and fortitude, that ye may be able to perform your duty, through the whole course of these persecutions; for ye shall be brought before the great men of the earth, for my sake. "But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought before-hand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate; but whatsoever shall be given unto you in that hour, that speak you; for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost." *Mark*, xiii. 11.

During this time of trouble and confusion, he told them the perfidy of mankind should be so great towards one another, that "brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death." The unbelieving Jews, and apostate Christians, shall commit the most enormous and inhuman crimes. It is, therefore, no wonder that the perfidy and wickedness of such pretended Christians, should discourage

DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE FORETOLD.

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"As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."—LUKE XXI. 6.

many disciples, and greatly hinder the propagation of the Gospel. But he who supports his faith, during these persecutions, and is not led astray by the seduction of false Christians, shall escape that terrible destruction, which like a deluge, will overflow the land.

And when Jerusalem shall be surrounded with armies, pagan armies, bearing in their standards the images of their gods, the "abomination of desolation," mentioned by the prophet Daniel: then let him who readeth the predictions of that prophet understand, that the end of the city and sanctuary, together with the ceasing of sacrifices and oblations there predicted, is come, and consequently the final period of the Jewish polity.

"Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let them which are in the midst of it depart out." *Luke*, xxi. 21. "Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house. Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes." *Matt.* xxiv. 17, 18. Then shall be fulfilled the awful predictions of the prophet Daniel, and the dreadful judgments denounced against the impenitent and unbelieving.

In those days of vengeance, the women who are with child, and those who have infants hanging at their breasts, shall be particularly unhappy, because they cannot flee from the impending destruction. "But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter," when the badness of the roads, and the rigor of the season, will render speedy travelling very troublesome, if not impossible; "neither on the sabbath-day," when you shall think it unlawful. "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." This is confirmed by what Josephus tells us, that no less than eleven hundred thousand perished in the siege.

The heavenly prophet added, that except the days of tribulation should be shortened, none of the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea, of whom he was speaking, should escape destruction: in confirmation of which, Josephus tells us, that the quarrels which raged during the siege, were so fierce and obstinate, that both within the walls of Jerusalem, and without in the neighboring country, the whole land was one continued scene of horror and desolation: and, had the siege continued much longer, the whole nation of the Jews had been totally destroyed, according to our Lord's prediction. "But," added our blessed Saviour, "for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days." By the elect are meant, such of the Jews as had embraced the doctrines of the Gospel, and particularly those who were brought in with the fulness of the Gentiles.

As it is natural, in time of trouble, to look with eager expectation for a deliverer, our blessed Saviour cautioned his disciples not to listen to any pretences of that kind, as many false Christs would arise, and deceive great numbers of the people. A prediction that was fully accomplished, during the terrible siege of Jerusalem by the Romans; for Josephus tells us, that many arose, pretending to be the Messiah, boasting that they would deliver the nation from all its enemies. And the multitude, always too prone to listen to deceivers, who promise temporal advantages, giving credit to those deceivers, became more obstinate in their opposition to the Romans, and thereby rendered their destruction more severe and inevitable.

And what still increased the infatuation of the people, was their performing wonderful things during the war; and accordingly Josephus calls them magicians and sorcerers. Hence we see the propriety of the caution given by the Son of God, who foretold that "they should shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect. But take heed: behold I have foretold you all things."

And as the partisans of the false Christs might pretend that the Messiah was concealed awhile, for fear of the Romans, and the weaker sort of Christians, without this warning, have imagined that Christ was actually returned to deliver the nation in its extremity, and to punish their enemies, who now so cruelly oppressed them, and that he would show himself as soon as it was proper, the blessed Jesus thought proper to caution them against this particular: "Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert, go not forth: behold he is in the secret chambers, believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." *Matt.* xxiv. 26, &c.

The coming of the Son of man shall be like lightning, swift and destructive. But he will not come personally, his servants only shall come, the Roman armies who, by his command, shall destroy this nation, as eagles devour their prey.

Having thus given them a particular account of the various circumstances which should precede the destruction of Jerusalem, he next described that catastrophe itself, in all the pomp of language and imagery made use of by the ancient prophets, when they foretold the destruction of cities and kingdoms. "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light: and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken." *Mark*, xiii. 24, &c. "And upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring: men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." *Luke*, xxi. 25, &c.

By these lofty and figurative expressions, the decaying of all the glory, excellency and prosperity of the nation, and the introduction of universal sadness, misery and confusion, are beautifully described. The roaring of the sea and the waves, may justly be considered as metaphorical, as the signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars are plainly so, and by the powers of heaven are meant the whole Jewish polity, government, laws and religion, which were the work of heaven: these, our Lord tells us, should be shaken, or rather dissolved.

As the disciples had, in conformity to the repeated questions of the pharisees, during his ministry, asked what should be the sign of his coming; our blessed Saviour told them, that after the tribulation of those days, when the sun should be darkened, and all the enemies of the Messiah should mourn, they should see the accomplishment of what Daniel foretold, by the figurative expression of the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven: for they should behold the signal punishment executed on the Jewish nation by the Roman armies sent for that purpose, and by the decree and permission of heaven. "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory." *Matt.* xxiv. 30.

Then were the followers of Christ to be delivered from the oppression under which they had long groaned, and openly honored before the whole earth: and on this may true believers rest, because it is founded on eternal truth. "Verily, I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.—Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." *Matt.* xxiv. 34, 35.

Whosoever shall compare the prediction of our Saviour with the history Josephus wrote of the war, cannot fail of being struck with the wisdom of Christ, and acknowledging that his prediction was truly divine: for as the Jewish nation was at this time in the most flourishing state, the events here foretold appeared altogether improbable. Besides, the circumstances of the destruction are very numerous and surprisingly great: and the whole delivered without any ambiguity. It is therefore a prophecy, of such a kind as could never have been uttered by any impostor, and consequently the person who delivered it was acquainted with the secret counsels of heaven, and was truly divine.

Many cavillers against the Christian religion have asked, why Christ should order his disciples not to flee from Jerusalem, till they saw it encompassed with the Roman army, when it would then be impossible for them to make their escape? But persons, before they propose such questions, would do well

to read attentively the history Josephus has given us of these terrible calamities; because they would there find a solution to the difficulty. That historian tells us, that Cestius Gallus surrounded the city with his army, and at a time when he could easily have taken the city, suddenly withdrew his forces, without any apparent reason. He adds, that as soon as the siege was raised, many eminent persons fled from it, as from a sinking ship. In all probability many of these were Christians, who being warned by this prophecy of their great Master, saved themselves by flight, as he had directed. Thus we see what frivolous objections are made by the free-thinkers of our age against the truth of the sacred writings, and how easily they are answered.

Having thus beautifully, but awfully, described this important and striking event, the blessed Jesus assured his disciples, that it would be very unexpected, and thence urged the necessity of a watchful vigilance, lest they should be surprised, and have a share in those calamities. "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." *Matt.* xxiv. 37. "Watch ye therefore; for ye know not when the master of the house cometh; at even, or at midnight, or at the cock crowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping." *Mark*, xiii. 35, 36.

It was natural, as men were to undergo, at the destruction of Jerusalem, nearly the same miseries, and as the passions which its approach would raise in their minds were similar to those which will happen at the destruction of the world and the general judgment; it was natural, I say, for our blessed Saviour, on this occasion, to put his disciples in mind of that judgment, and to exhort them to the faithful discharge of their duty, from the consideration of the suddenness of his coming to call every individual to account after death:—"Therefore, be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Verily, I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods." *Matt.* xxiv. 44, &c. As if he had said, You, who are ministers of religion, ought to be particularly attentive in discharging the important trust committed to your care; you are the stewards to whom are intrusted the whole household of the church; and you would do well to remember, that your example will have a great effect upon the minds of those employed under you. It is your duty to be well acquainted with the stores of evangelical truths, and to understand how they may be applied to the best advantage; you should also be careful to know the characters of the different

THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS.

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"Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not."—MATT. xxv. 11, 12.

persons under your directions, that you may be able to give every one of them a portion of meat in due season; and if I find you thus employed at my coming, I will reward you with the joys of my kingdom, even as an earthly master bestows particular marks of respect on such servants as have been remarkably faithful in any important trust.

But on the other hand, if you are not true to the trust reposed in you; if you pervert your office and watch not over the souls committed to your care, I will come unto you unexpectedly, and make you dreadful examples of mine anger, by the severe punishments which I will inflict upon you. "But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken: the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of; and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." *Matt.* xxiv. 48, &c.

Having thus generally prescribed the future state of retribution, our Lord passed to the consideration of the general judgment, when those rewards and punishments should be distributed in their utmost extent. This could not fail of animating his disciples to a rigorous discharge of their duty; and the striking representation of the last judgment he has here given, must greatly tend to rouse the consciences of men from their lethargy, and lead them to consider before it be too late, "the things which belong to their peace."

Then shall the kingdom of heaven, the gospel-kingdom, in the last dispensation of it, when the kingdom of grace is going to be swallowed up in the kingdom of glory, "be likened unto ten virgins which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom, and five of them were wise, and five of them were foolish." They that were foolish took their lamps, but put no oil in their vessels; while the wise, as an instance of their prudence and foresight, took both their lamps, and oil in their vessels, knowing that it was uncertain when the bridegroom would arrive, and that they might in all probability, wait long for his coming. Nor were they mistaken: for the bridegroom did not come so soon as they expected. And while he tarried, they all slumbered and slept; and at midnight there was a great cry made, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him: then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps; and the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, not so, lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in

with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily, I say unto you, I know you not. Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day, nor the hour, wherein the Son of man cometh." *Matt.* xxv. 6, 7, &c.

In order to understand this parable, we must remember, that it alludes to eastern people. It was usual with them for the bridegroom to bring his bride home in the evening, sooner or later, as circumstances might happen; and that they might be received properly at his house, his female acquaintance, especially those of the younger sort, were invited to come and wait with lamps, till some of his retinue, despatched before the rest, informed them that he was near at hand; upon which they trimmed their lamps; went forth to welcome him, and conduct him with his bride into the house; for which they were honored as guests, at the marriage feasts, and shared in the usual festivities.

To ten such virgins our blessed Saviour compares all those to whom the Gospel is preached, because this was the general number appointed to wait on the bridegroom; and to these all Christian professors may be likened, who taking their lamp of Christian profession, go forth to meet the bridegroom; that is, prepare themselves as candidates for the kingdom of heaven, and desire to be admitted with Christ, the celestial bridegroom, into the happy mansions of immortality.

We must remember, that there always was, and always will be, a mixture of good and bad in the church, till the great day of separation arrives. The weakness of the foolish is represented by their taking no oil in their vessels, with their lamps; that is, the foolish Christians content themselves with the bare lamp of a profession, and never think of furnishing it with the oil of divine grace, the fruit of which is a life of holiness. Whereas the wise, well knowing that a lamp, without the supply of oil, would be speedily extinguished; that faith, without love and holiness, will be of no consequence, take care to supply themselves with a sufficient quantity of the divine grace, and to display in their lives the works of love and charity. While all those virgins, though differently supplied, waited the coming of the bridegroom, all slumbered and slept; that is, all Christians, both good and bad, the sincere and the hypocrite, all lie down together in the sleep of death; and while the bridegroom delays his coming, slumber in the chambers of the dust.

The Jews have a tradition, that Christ's coming to judgment will be at midnight, which agrees with that particular in the parable, "at midnight there was a cry made, Go ye out to meet him." But however this be, whether he will come at midnight, or in the morning, it will be awfully sudden and alarming.

The great cry will be heard to the end of the earth! the trumpet shall sound, and the mighty archangel's voice pierce even the bowels of the earth, and the depths of the ocean: "Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him."

The graves, both earthly, and waterly, must surrender their clayey tenants, and all will then begin to think how they may prepare themselves to find admittance to the marriage supper of the Lamb. "Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps." But the foolish soon perceived their folly: their lamps were gone out, totally extinguished, and they had no oil to support the flame; in like manner the hypocrite's hope shall perish. But the wise were in a much happier condition; they had oil in their vessels sufficient for themselves, but none to spare; for when the foolish virgins would have procured some from them, they denied their request, fearing there would not be enough for both.

There are here beautifully represented nominal and sincere Christians. The former having only the bare lamp of a profession, and who have not been solicitous to gain the oil of divine grace, by a constant use of the means assigned, will fare like the foolish virgins. While the latter, whose hearts are stocked with divine oil, will, like the wise virgins, enter into the joy of their Lord.

But the foolish, going to purchase oil, missed the bridegroom, and behold "the door was shut." They at last, however, reached the gate, and with great importunity cried, "Lord, Lord, open unto us." But he answered and said, "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not." As you denied me on earth, I deny you now; depart from me, for I know you not! How justly, therefore, did our blessed Saviour bid us all "watch," that we may be found ready whenever he cometh; or commands, by the king of terrors, our attendance before his judgment seat. Let us not refuse this kind invitation, of being constantly prepared to meet the heavenly bridegroom: let us fill our lamps with oil, that we may be ready to follow our great master into the happy mansions of the heavenly Canaan.

But, as this duty was of the utmost importance, our blessed Saviour, to show us more clearly the nature and use of Christian watchfulness, to which he exhorts us at the conclusion of the parable of the ten virgins, added another, wherein he represented the different characters of a faithful and slothful servant, and the difference of their future acceptation.

This parable, like the former, is intended to stir us up to a zealous preparation for the coming of our Lord, by diligence in the discharge of our duty, and by a careful improvement of our souls in holiness; and at the same time to expose the vain pretences of hypocrites, and to demonstrate, that fair speeches and

outward form, without the power of godliness, will be of no service in the last day of account.

The Son of man, said he, may, with respect to his final coming to judge the world, be likened unto "a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability: and straightway took his journey." *Matt.* xxv. 14, 15.

Immediately on his master's departure, he that had received the five talents lost no time, but went and traded with the same, and his increase was equal to his industry and application; he made them other five talents. He that had received two talents did the same, and had equal success. But he that received one, very unlike the conduct of his fellow servants, went his way, digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money, idle, useless, unemployed, and unimproved.

After a long time, and at an hour when they did not expect it, the lord of those servants returned, called them before him, and ordered them to give an account of their several trusts. Upon which he that had received five talents, as a proof of his fidelity produced other five talents, saying, "Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents, behold I have gained besides them five talents more." *Matt.* xxv. 20. His lord, highly applauding his industry and fidelity, said to him, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee a ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." *Matt.* xxv. 21.

In like manner also, he that had received two talents declared he had gained two others; upon which he was honored with the same applause, and admitted into the same joy with his fellow servant; their master having regard to the industry and fidelity of his servants, not to the number of the talents only, but the greatness of their increase.

After this, he that had received the one talent came, and, with a shameful falsehood, to excuse his vile indolence, said, "Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed; and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth; lo, there thou hast that is thine." *Matt.* xxv. 24, 25.

This perversion of even the smallest portion of grace greatly excited the resentment of his lord, who answered, "Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strewed; thou oughtest, therefore, to have put my money to the exchangers, and then, at my coming, I should have received mine own with usury. Take, therefore, the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath

ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." *Matt.* xxv. 26, &c.

Such is the parable of the talents, as delivered by our blessed Saviour; a parable containing the measure of our duty to God, and the motives that enforce it, all delivered in the plainest and simplest allusion. But its views are so extensive and affecting, that while it instructs the meanest capacity, it engages reverence and attention from the greatest, and strikes an impression on the most improved understanding. We are to consider God as our Lord and Master, the author and giver of every good gift, and ourselves as his servants or stewards, who, in various instances and measures, have received from his goodness such blessings and abilities, as may fit us for the several stations and offices of life to which his providence appoints us. But then we are to observe, that these are committed to us as a trust or loan, for whose due management we are accountable to the donor.

If we faithfully acquit ourselves of this probationary charge, we shall receive far greater instances of God's confidence and favor: but if we are remiss and negligent, we must expect to feel his resentment and displeasure.

A time will come, and how near it may be none of us can tell, when our great Master will demand a particular account of every talent he hath committed to our care. This time may, indeed, be at a distance: for it is uncertain when the king of terrors will receive the awful warrant to terminate our existence here below; yet it will certainly come, and our eternal happiness or misery depends upon it: so that we should have it continually in our thoughts, and engrave it as with the point of a diamond, on the tables of our hearts.

We learn from this instructive parable, that infinite wisdom hath entrusted men with different talents, and adjusted them to the various purposes of human life. But though the gifts of men are unequal, none can, with justice, complain; since whatever is bestowed, be it more or less, is a favor entirely unmerited.

Each then should be thankful, and satisfied with his portion; and, instead of envying the more liberal endowments of others, apply himself to the improvement of his own. And it should be attentively observed, that the difficulty of the task is in proportion to the number of talents committed to each. He who had received five was to gain other five; and he who had received two, was to account for other two.

Surely then, we have no reason to complain if our master has laid on us a lighter burden, a more easy and less service, than what he has on others. Especially as our interest in the favor of the Almighty, does not depend on the number of our talents, but on our diligence and application in the management of them: so that the moral design of this parable is, to engage our utmost attention, to improve such talents as our heavenly Father has thought proper to bestow upon us.

By these talents are principally meant, the communication and graces of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows in different measures, "dividing to every man severally as he will." And subordinate to these are all the means, opportunities, and abilities to exercise or improve their grace; all the advantages of station, fortune, education, and whatever may enable us to do good; for we, having received all we enjoy from God, are strictly obliged to promote the wise ends for which he bestows his favor. And here let us take a short and imperfect view of what God has done for us. He has given us reason and understanding to discern good from evil, and inquire into the causes, relations, and consequences of things, to collect from them proper rules of judgment and action. Indeed, since the fall this faculty has been much obscured; but still it remains a universal gift of God to men; and though not equal in all, yet, it is given to every man in such measure, as is sufficient for their direction. In the knowledge of our duty, and the pursuit of our happiness, God has, by the Gospel, so graciously supplied the defect of reason, that the weakest understanding may know how to be happy; such assistances of divine grace attend every Christian, if he will apply to God for it, as may enable him to direct his inclinations, govern his passions, and subdue his corrupt affections. These talents of nature are in some degree common to all men; and by the improvement of that grace which is conferred on every one, all have sufficient to conduct them through the several stages of life, if they will use but proper diligence and application. But regard must be had to all the means for cultivating those gifts of nature and grace, such as all opportunities of instruction, the ministry, and ordinances of religion, the reproofs and examples of good men, the occasions offered and the abilities given for the exercise of virtue. All these are talents, or gifts of God, deposited with us, to be diligently made use of, and for which we are accountable to him.

We shall therefore proceed to show what duty is required from us, in the improvement of these talents. It is here supposed, that these talents are improvable, or otherwise they would be of no use or value; and indeed we are bound, by the command of God, who has threatened to inflict severe penal-

ties if we neglect to improve them. And if they are not improved they will not continue long with us, but be lost; the finest parts and capacities, without proper culture, will make but a mean and contemptible figure. No knowledge can be preserved without use and exercise, and the same holds with regard to moral accomplishments. It requires great care and attention to form a virtuous habit, but much more to preserve it in its vigor. Unless we co-operate with the motions of God's grace, and cultivate it by use and application, its impressions will gradually wear out, and be lost. "The Spirit of God will not always strive with man." He gives us a stock to manage, equal to the service he expects from us; but if we are slothful and negligent, and will not apply it to the purposes for which it was given, he will recall the useless gift. "Take from him," says he, "the talent, and give it to him that hath ten talents." Let us, therefore, diligently improve every talent committed to us, because this will be required of us, in the day of accounts. Happy the man who has improved his talents on earth! What this improvement implies, and how we may discharge this duty, is an inquiry of the nearest concern to us. The proper improvement of all God's gifts is, the employing them so as may best promote his glory.

This is the end the Almighty has proposed in our creation; in all the powers he has endued us with, in all the aids of grace he has vouchsafed us. Whatever other improvements we make of them will not profit us, nor be admitted as any proof of our fidelity, in the day of reckoning. We may cultivate our understanding by learning and study, and extend our knowledge through all the subjects of human inquiry; but if our end be only to gratify our curiosity or our vanity, we are not serving God, but ourselves; we may increase our portion of God's outward gifts, but if we only apply them to enlarge our own conveniences, we are not making the improvements our Master expects; we may take pleasure in our knowledge and fortune, rejoice in them as our portion and instrument in our present situation; but we must still remember, that in our reckoning with God, all these improvements of our capacities and abilities will be added to our account. And the only use God will admit us to set in balance of our debt to him, is to employ them as means of increasing and multiplying our virtues, or as instruments of exercising them in the work of piety and religion.

From hence we may infer that there will be degrees of future glory and happiness, proportioned to our eminence in the divine life, and the service we have done to the cause of Christ.

Dreadful will be his curse, who has squandered away the stock itself; suffered his gifts to perish for want of use; or, by

abusing them to the service of sin, has provoked the Almighty to take them from him.

How shall the prodigal recall the fortune he has spent, and appease the anger of his judge? The terrors of the Lord may justly affright him; but it should not extinguish his endeavors in despair. He has lost many excellent talents; but he who gave can restore. Indeed, the most circumspect piety will, in the great day of accounts want much to be forgiven: and must expect his reward from the mercy of his judge, not from the merit of his service. Let us then do all in our power to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. For though the awful day of the Lord may be at a great distance, yet the time allotted us to prepare for it is limited by the short space of human life. The night of death cometh when no man can work. To-day, therefore, while it is called to-day, let us be diligent in the work of the Lord, correct our errors, and finish what is imperfect, that we may obtain his approbation, and make our calling and election sure.

We shall now proceed to the third parable delivered at the same time by the blessed Jesus, namely, that of the last judgment. "When the Son of Man," said he, "shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them, one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." *Matt.* xxv. 31. It is common, in the Old Testament, to compare good men to sheep, on account of their innocence and usefulness; and wicked men to goats, for their exorbitant lusts. Our blessed Saviour, however, does not pursue the allegory farther, but describes the remaining, and indeed the greatest part of this awful scene, in terms perfectly simple; so that though the sense be profound, it is obvious.

Here the judgment of all nations, Gentiles, as well as Christians, is exhibited; and the particulars on which these awful trials are to proceed, displayed by the great judge himself.

Here we learn, that we shall be condemned or acquitted, according as we have neglected or performed works of charity; works which flow from the great principles of faith and piety, and which the very heathens are, by the light of nature invited to perform. But we must not understand that such works merited this favor from the Judge; no, all who are acquitted at that day, whether heathens or Christians, shall be acquitted solely on account of the righteousness of Christ, the true, the only meritorious cause.

Good men can at best but consider their present state as a banishment from their native country. A state in which they

are often exposed to innumerable temptations, to persecutions, to poverty, to reproach, to contempt. But the consideration that they are travelling towards the heavenly Jerusalem, a city prepared for them when the foundations of the world were laid, will be abundantly sufficient to support their spirits, and render them "more than conquerors." The glory laid up for them in the mansions of eternity, and which the great Judge will, at the awful day of accounts, confer upon them, will animate them to bear the violence of their oppressors, and even defy the malice of men and devils. Nay, they will behold with contempt the flourishing prosperity of the wicked, and look forward to that glorious and immortal crown, which will be given them by their great Redeemer. "Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." *Matt.* xxv. 34, &c.

The enraptured and amazed soul shall then ask, with great reverence and humility, when they performed these services? as they never saw him in want, and therefore could not assist him. "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick or in prison, and came unto thee? And the king shall answer and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." *Matt.* xxv. 37, &c. This is truly astonishing! The united wisdom of men and angels could never have discovered a more proper method to convey an idea of the warmth and force of the divine benevolence to the sons of men, or offer a more forcible motive to charity, than that the Son of God should, from his seat of judgment, in presence of the whole race of mankind, and all the hosts of blessed spirits from the courts of heaven, declare that all good offices done to the afflicted are done to himself.

During the time of his dwelling with human nature in this vale of tears, he suffered unspeakable injuries and afflictions: and, therefore, considers all the distressed virtuous as members of his body, loves them with the utmost tenderness, and is so greatly interested in their welfare, that he rejoices when they are happy, and grieves when they are distressed.

Perhaps the true reason why the grand inquiry shall rest solely on the performance of duties is, that men, generally speaking, consider the neglect of duties as a matter of no great consequence, but dread the commission of crimes. And hence it

happens, that while they keep themselves free from the latter, they easily find excuses for the former. And as there is not a more pernicious error, with regard to religion and morality, than this, the blessed Jesus thought proper to give such an account of the judgment as should prove the most solemn caution against it.

But as the inquiry turns wholly on the performance of the duties of charity, it has been asked, why these duties only are mentioned, and no notice taken of the duties of piety; though the judge himself, upon another occasion, declared these to be of more importance than the duties of charity, so highly applauded in this parable? But those who ask this question, would do well to remember, that piety and charity cannot subsist separately; piety, and its origin faith, always producing charity; and charity, wherever it subsists, necessarily pre-supposing piety.

The connexion between piety and charity will evidently appear, if it be considered, that no man can be truly benevolent and merciful, without loving those dispositions. Consequently he must love benevolence in God, that is, he must love God; for piety or the love of God, is nothing else but the regard we cherish towards God on account of his perfections.

Piety and charity being thus essentially connected together, it is abundantly sufficient to examine the conduct of men, with regard to either of those graces. In the parable, the inquiry is represented as turning upon the duties of charity, perhaps, because in this branch of goodness, there is less room for self-deceit than in the other. It is common for hypocrites by a pretended zeal in the externals of religion, to make specious pretences to extraordinary piety, and at the same time are totally deficient in charity; are covetous, unjust, rapacious, and proud, and consequently destitute of all love for their Creator. But none can assume the appearance of charity but by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, relieving the distressed, and performing other benevolent offices to their brethren.

The work of charity may, indeed, in some particular cases, flow from other principles than those of a pious and benevolent disposition, as from vanity, or even views of interest; but then it should be remembered, that a common degree of hypocrisy will hardly engage men to undertake them; they are by far too weighty duties to be sustained by those false principles, and, therefore, are seldom counterfeited. Consequently, wherever a genuine, extensive, and permanent charity is found, we may conclude, that there the love of God reigns in perfection.

Hence we learn that all pretences to goodness, without a principle of grace wrought in the heart, avail nothing in point of eternal salvation. At the same time, if we consider it in its full

light, it will give us no reason to think well of ourselves, if we are wanting in our duty to God; and that we should not only be charitable, but grateful also, just, temperate, and blameless, in all our dealings with mankind. For we should remember that the duty we owe to the Almighty is no other than what is due to men in the like circumstances, and which it would be unjust in us to neglect. It consists in dispositions and actions, the same in kind, but different in degree, proportionate to the perfection of the object.

He who loves and admires holiness, justice, and truth in men, cannot but love those perfections in God, that is, he must love God; so, likewise, he that is truly grateful to any earthly benefactor, cannot be ungrateful to one from whose bounty he receives all the good things he enjoys; and since ingratitude in men is nothing more than forgetting the benefits received, and the benefactor who conferred the favor; how can we acquit ourselves from the charge of ingratitude to God; if we forget the obligations we lie under to him, and are at no pains to return him thanks; that is, if we wholly neglect the external and internal exercises of devotion?

Since, therefore, the duty we owe to God is the same in kind with what we owe to man in like circumstances, it will undeniably follow, that true morality can never exist where piety is wanting; and that those who pretend to morality, and are destitute of piety, render themselves ridiculous.

The awful judge himself has told us, that after he nas passed the happy sentence on the righteous, he will pronounce the following sentence of condemnation upon the wicked: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." *Matt.* xxv. 41, &c.

It is remarkable, that our blessed Saviour has told us, that the original design of Omnipotence was to render man happy, not miserable: a state of consummate felicity was formed for the human race, at the time they were created; but the fire of hell was prepared for the devil and his angels immediately after their fall. And as wicked men joined with devils in their sin of rebellion against the Almighty, they are doomed to share

with them in their punishment: a punishment of the heaviest kind; a punishment of devils.

After having represented the sentences that are to be passed on the righteous and the wicked, our Saviour closes the parable in the following manner: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." *Matt.* xxv. 46.

Happy decision to the followers of the Lamb! awful sentence to the workers of iniquity! may it excite us to pray for that grace by which alone we shall obtain the latter!

CHAPTER XXXII.

Our blessed Lord is anointed by a poor but pious woman.—The perfidious Judas consents to betray his Master.—The humble Jesus washes the feet of his Disciples, and foretels that Disciple who was to betray him into the hands of his inveterate enemies.

The blessed Jesus used frequently to retire, in the evening, from the city to the Mount of Olives, and there spend the night, either in some village or the gardens, in order to avoid falling into the hands of his enemies. They did not, indeed, presume to attack him, while he was surrounded by his followers in the day time: but, in all probability, had he lodged within the city, they would have apprehended him during the darkness and silence of the night.

When our blessed Saviour had finished these parables, he added a short account of his own death, in order to fortify his disciples against the greatest trial they had met with; namely, the sufferings of their Master. "And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified. Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people." *Matt.* xxvi. 1, &c.

When the evening approached, our blessed Saviour, with his disciples, repaired to Bethany, and entered the house of Simon the leper, probably one who had experienced the healing efficacy of his power. But while he sat at meat, a woman, who

had also, doubtless, been an object of his mercy, poured a box of precious ointment upon his head.

This action displeased the disciples, who knew that their Master was not delighted with luxuries of any kind; and therefore they rebuked the woman, imagining that it would have been more acceptable to the Son of God, if the ointment had been sold, and the money distributed among the sons and daughters of poverty and affliction.

To reprove the disciples, Jesus told them, that it had pleased the divine Providence to order that there should always be persons in necessitous circumstances, that the virtuous might never want occasions for exercising their charity; but that those who did not now testify their love to him would never more have the opportunity of doing it, as the time of his ministry was near its period, when the king of terrors should enjoy a short triumph over his body; and therefore this woman had seasonably anointed him for his burial. And to make them sensible of their folly, in blaming the woman for this her expression of love to him, he assured them that she should be highly esteemed for this action, in every part of the world, and her memory live to the latest period of time.

Judas Iscariot (one of the twelve, having been more forward than the rest in condemning the woman, thought the rebuke was particularly directed to him) stung with the guilt of his own conscience, arose from the table, and went immediately into the city to the high priest's palace, where he found the whole council assembled. His passion would not suffer him to reflect on the horrid deed he was going to commit; he immediately promised for the reward of thirty pieces of silver, to betray into their hands his Lord and Master.

Having thus engaged with the rulers of Israel, to put into their hands a person who had been long laboring for their salvation, who had often invited them in the most pathetic manner, to embrace the benevolent terms of the Gospel, offered by the Almighty, he sought an opportunity to betray him in the absence of the multitude.

Our Lord, who well knew that the time of his suffering drew nigh, desired, therefore, to celebrate the passover with his disciples. He was now going to finish the mighty work for which he came into the world; and therefore would not neglect to fulfil the smallest particular of the law of Moses. He therefore sent two of his disciples into the city, to prepare a lamb, and make it ready, for eating the passover; telling them that they should meet a man, bearing a pitcher of water, who would conduct them to his house, and show them a large upper room furnished, where they were to make ready for him. He was willing in this last transaction to convince his disciples, that he

knew every thing that should befall him ; that his sufferings were all pre-determined by the Almighty, and that they were all, on his own account submitted unto voluntarily.

When night approached, Jesus left Bethany ; and every thing being ready for him, at the time he entered into the city, he sat down at the appointed hour. But knowing that his sufferings were now near, he told his disciples in the most affectionate manner, that he greatly longed to eat the passover with them before he suffered, in order to show them the strongest proof of his love. These proofs were to give them a pattern of humility and charity by washing their feet ; instructing them in the nature of his death, and a propitiatory sacrifice ; instituting the sacrament, in commemoration of his sufferings ; comforting them by the tender discourses recorded *John*, xiv. xv. xvi. in which he gave them a variety of excellent directions, together with many gracious promises ; and recommending them to the kind protection of his heavenly Father. " With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you, before I suffer. For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

Having thus spoken, he arose from the table, laid aside his garments like a servant, and, with all the officiousness of a humble minister, washed the feet of his disciples, without distinction, though one of them, Judas Iscariot, was a monster of impiety ; that they might at once behold a conjunction of charity, and humility, and self-denial, and indifference, represented by a person glorious beyond expression, their great Lord and Master.

He washed their feet (according to a custom which prevailed in those hot countries both before and after meat) in order to show them an example of the utmost humility and condescension.

The omnipotent Son of the Father lays every thing aside that he may serve his followers: heaven stoops to earth, one abyss calls upon another, and the miseries of man, which were almost infinite, are exceeded by a mercy equal to the immensity of the Almighty. He deferred this ceremony which was a customary civility paid to honorable strangers at the beginning of their feast, that it might be preparatory to the second, which he intended should be a feast to the whole world, when all the followers of the blessed Jesus should have an opportunity, in a spiritual manner, of feeding on his flesh, and drinking his blood.

When our blessed Saviour came to Peter, he modestly declined it ; but his Master told him, if he refused to submit implicitly to all his orders, he could have no part with him. On which Peter cried out, " Lord, not my feet only, but also my

hands and my head." But Jesus told him, that the person who had bathed himself had no reason to wash any part of the body except his feet, which he might have dirtied by walking from the bath. And added, Ye are all clean, as to the outward laver, but not as to the inward and spiritual laver: I well know that one of you will betray me.

When our gracious Lord had finished this menial service, he asked his disciples, if they knew the meaning of what he had done, as the action was purely emblematical? You truly, added he, style me Master and Lord, for I am the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. But if I your Master and your Lord, have condescended to wash your feet, you surely ought to perform with the utmost pleasure, the humblest offices of charity one to another. I have set you a pattern of humility, and I recommend it to you.

And certainly nothing can more effectually show us the necessity of this heavenly temper of mind than its being recommended to us by so great an example: a recommendation, which in the present circumstances, was particularly seasonable; for the disciples having heard their great Master declare that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, their minds were filled with ambitious thoughts. And therefore our blessed Saviour added, Ye need not be ashamed to follow my example in this particular; for no servant can think it beneath him to condescend to perform those actions his lord had done before him. And therefore if he knows his duty, he will be happy if he practises it. He moreover added, that though he had called them all to the apostleship, and well knew the secret dispositions of every heart, before he chose them, they need not be surprised that one among them should prove a traitor, as it was done that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "He that eateth bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me."

As our blessed Saviour was now to be but a short time with his disciples, he thought proper to take his farewell of them, which he did in a most affectionate manner. These melancholy tidings greatly troubled them. They were unwilling to part with so kind a friend, so dear a Master, so wise a guide, and so profitable a teacher; especially as they thought they should be left in a forlorn condition, a poor and helpless prey to the rage and hatred of a blind and malicious generation. They seemed willing to die with their Lord, if that might be accepted. Why cannot I follow thee! I will lay down my life for thee! was the language of one, and even all of them: but they could not support the thoughts of a disconsolate separation.

Their great and compassionate Master, seeing them thus dejected, endeavored to cheer their drooping spirits: "Let not

your hearts be troubled." Listen attentively to what I am going to deliver for your consolation: "I am going to prepare a place for you: I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also." A reviving admonition! They were one day to meet again their dear, their affectionate Master, in a place where they should live together to all eternity.

But death makes so vast a distance between friends, and the disciples then knew so little of a future state, that they seemed to doubt whether they should, after their parting, meet their great Redeemer. They neither knew the place where he was going, nor the way that led to his kingdom. "Lord," said they, "as we know not whither thou goest, how can we know the way?" In answer to this question, he told them, that he was "the way, the truth, and the light;" as if he had said, Through the propitiatory sacrifice, I am about to offer, the sacred truths I have delivered, and the divine assistance which I shall hereafter dispense, you are to obtain that happiness which I go to prepare for you.

But lest all these arguments should not prove sufficient to quiet their minds, he had still another, which could not fail of success: "If ye love me," says he, "ye will rejoice, because I said, I go to the Father." Intimating that he would consider it as a proof of their love to him, if they ceased to mourn. They doubtless thought, that by grieving for his death, they expressed their love to their Master; and it might seem strange that our Saviour should put so contrary an interpretation on their friendly sorrow, or require so unnatural a thing of them as to rejoice at his departure. What! (might they think) shall we rejoice at so amiable a friend's removal from us; or can we be glad, that he retires, and leaves us in this vale of misery? No, it is impossible; the human heart, on so melancholy an occasion, can have no disposition to rejoice.

Our blessed Saviour, therefore, adds his reason, to solve the seeming paradox; because he was going to the Father: that is, he was going to ascend to the right hand of infinite power, from whence he would send them all the assistance they could desire. It must not, however, be supposed, that he meant by these words, that his disciples should not be concerned at his death, or that they could not love him unless they expressed a visible joy on this occasion. That would, indeed, have been a hard interpretation of their grief: he knew their grief flowed from love; and that if their love had not been strong, their sorrow had been much less. Indeed, their Master was fully convinced that love was the occasion of their sorrow; and, therefore, he used these arguments to mitigate it, and to direct it in a proper course.

Nor did our Lord intend to intimate that all sorrow for so worthy a friend was unlawful, or an unbecoming expression of their love: doubtless he was not displeased to see his disciples so tenderly affected at his removal from them. He who shed tears at the grave of Lazarus, blended with sighs and groans, cannot be thought to forbid them wholly at his own. He therefore did not chide his disciples with angry reproaches, as though they had been entirely in the wrong, but gently reasoned with them by kind persuasion. "Let not your hearts be troubled," as rather pitying than condemning their sorrow.

Soon after Jesus had spoken these things, his heart was greatly troubled, to think that one of his disciples should prove his enemy; he complained of it at the table, declaring that one of them should betray him. This moving declaration greatly affected the disciples; and they began every one of them to say to their Master, "Lord, is it I?" But Jesus giving them no decisive answer, John, the beloved disciple, whose sweet disposition and other amiable qualities is perpetuated in the peculiar love his great Master bore him, and was now reclining on his bosom, asked him, who among the disciples could be guilty of so detestable a crime? Jesus told him, that the person to whom he should give the sop, when he had dipped it, was he who should betray him. Accordingly, as soon as he had dipped the sop in the dish, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, saying to him, at the same time, "That thou doest, do quickly."

Judas received the sop, without knowing any thing of what his Master had told the beloved disciple: nor did any of the disciples, except St. John, entertain the least suspicion that Judas was the person who would betray their Master.

The innocent disciples were, indeed, so deeply affected with this declaration, that one of them should betray him, that they did not remark the words of Jesus to his apostate disciple: but continued to ask him, who was the person that should be guilty of so unnatural a crime? Willing, at last, to satisfy their importunity, the blessed Jesus declared, that the person who dipped his hand with him in the dish should betray him. This, to the eleven, was a joyful declaration, but confounding in the highest degree to Judas. Impudent as he was, it struck him speechless, pointing him out plainly, and displaying the foulness of his heart.

While Judas continued mute with confusion, the blessed Jesus declared that his death should be brought about according to the decrees of heaven, though that would not, in the least, mitigate the crime of the person who betrayed him; adding, "it had been good for that man if he had never been born." Judas having now recovered himself a little, asserted his innocence by a question which implied a denial of the charge. But

his Master soon silenced him, by positively affirming that he was really the person.

As various conjectures have been formed concerning the motives which induced the perfidious Judas cruelly to deliver up his innocent Master into the hands of his enemies, it may not be improper to cite those which appear to be most probable, though the decision must be entirely left to the reader.

Some are of opinion that he was induced to commit this villany by the resentment of the rebuke given him by his Master for blaming the woman who came with the precious ointment, and anointed the head of Jesus as he sat at meat in the house of Simon the leper. But though this had, doubtless, its weight with the traitor, yet it could not, I think, be his only motive; because the rebuke was given in general to all the disciples, who had, perhaps, been equally forward with him in censuring the woman. Nor can we imagine, even if he had been rebuked alone, that so mild a reproof could provoke any person, however wicked, to the horrid act of murdering his friend; much less Judas, whose covetous disposition must have disposed him to bear every thing from his Master, from whom he expected the highest preferment, if he should openly declare himself the Messiah, and take the reins of government into his own hands.

Others think that Judas betrayed his Master through covetousness. But, if we understand by covetousness the reward given by the priests, this opinion is equally defective; for the sum was too small for the most covetous wretch to think equivalent to the life of a friend, especially when he expected from him the highest posts and advantages.

Others attribute the perfidy of Judas to his doubting whether his master was the Messiah; and that he betrayed him in a fit of despair. But of all the solutions, this is the worst founded. For if Judas believed his Master to be an impostor, he must have observed something in his behaviour which led him to form such an opinion of him: and in that case he would doubtless have mentioned it to the chief priests and elders, when he made the contract with them; which it is plain he did not, as they would have reminded him of it when he came back and expressed his remorse for what he had done. It should also be observed, that had Judas given them any intimations of this kind, they would doubtless have urged them against our blessed Saviour himself, in the course of his trial, when they were at so great a loss for witnesses to support their accusations; and against the apostles afterwards, when they reproved them for speaking in the name of Jesus. Besides, had Judas thought his Master an impostor, and proposed nothing by his treachery but the price he put upon his life, how came he to sell him for

such a trifle, when he well knew that the chief priests and rulers would have given him any sum rather than not have got him into their hands?

In fine, the supposition that Judas believed his Master to be an impostor, is directly confuted by the solemn declaration he made to the priests, when he declared the deepest conviction of the innocence of our great Redeemer: "I have sinned," says he, "in betraying innocent blood."

It must be remembered that the remorse he felt for his crime, when he saw his master condemned, was too bitter to be endured; so that he fled even to the king of terrors for relief.

The Evangelist, St. John, tells us, that he was of so covetous a disposition, as to steal money out of our Lord's bag; and hence we have sufficient reason to believe, that he first followed Jesus with a view of obtaining riches, and other temporal advantages, which he expected the Messiah's friends would enjoy.—It likewise authorizes us to think that as he had hitherto reaped none of these advantages, he might grow impatient under the delay: and the rather, as Jesus had lately discouraged all ambitious views among his disciples, and neglected to embrace the opportunity of erecting that kingdom which was offered him by the multitude, who accompanied him into Jerusalem, with shouts, and crying, Hosannah to the Son of David. His impatience, therefore, becoming excessive, suggested to him the thought of delivering his Master into the hands of the council, firmly persuaded that he would then be obliged to assume the dignity of the Messiah, and consequently be able to reward his followers. For as this court was composed of the chief priests, elders, and scribes, that is, the principal persons of the sarcedotal order, the representatives of the great families, and the doctors of the law; the traitor did not doubt that his Master, when brought before so august an assembly, would assert his pretensions to the title of Messiah, prove his claim to their full conviction, gain them over to his interest, and immediately enter on his regal dignity. And though he must be sensible that the measures he took to compass his intention were very offensive to his Master, yet he might think the success of it would procure his pardon from so compassionate a master, and even recommend him to favor. In the mean time his project, however plausible it may appear to one of his turn, was far from being free from difficulty: and therefore, while he revolved it in his own mind, many things might occur to stagger his resolution. At length thinking himself affronted by the rebuke of Jesus, at the time when the woman anointed the head of his Master, he was provoked to execute the resolution he had formed of obliging him to alter his measures. Rising, therefore, directly from the table, he went immediately into the city, to the

palace of the high priest, where he found the council assembled, consulting how they might take Jesus by subtlety in the absence of the multitude.

To them he made known his intention of delivering his Master into their hands; and undertook, for a small sum of money to conduct a band of armed men to the place where the Saviour of the world usually spent the night with his disciples, where they might apprehend him without the least danger of a tumult.

Some reasons may be offered in support of this opinion, concerning the motives which induced Judas to betray his Master. First,—From the nature of the contract: "What will ye give me," said he, "and I will deliver him unto you?" He did not mean that he would deliver him up to be put to death; for though the priests had consulted among themselves, how they might destroy Jesus, they had not been so abominably wicked as to declare their intention publicly; they only proposed to bring him to trial, for assuming the character of the Messiah, and to treat him as it should appear he deserved. The offer, therefore, which Judas made them of delivering him up, was in conformity to their declared resolutions. Nor did they understand it in any other light; for had the priests thought that his design in this was to get his Master punished with death, they must also have thought he believed him to be an impostor; in which case they would, doubtless, have produced him as one of their principal evidences, no person being more proper. Also, when Judas returned to them with the money, declaring that he had sinned in betraying the innocent blood, instead of replying, "What is that to us? see thou to that;" it was the most natural thing in the world to have upbraided him with the stain he had put upon his Master's character, by the contract they had made with him.

It is true they called the money they gave him "the price of blood;" but they did not mean this in the strictest sense, as they had neither hired Judas to assassinate his Master, nor can they be supposed to have charged themselves with the guilt of murdering him. It was only the price of blood, consequently being the reward they had given to the traitor, for putting it in their power to take away the life of Christ, under the color and form of public justice. Now it may be doubted whether Judas asked the money as a reward of his services. He covetously, indeed, kept it; and the priests, for that reason, called it the price of blood.

In short, Judas knew that the rulers could not take away the life of any person whatsoever, the Romans, having deprived them of that power, and therefore could have no design of this kind in delivering him up: not to mention that it was a common opinion among the Jews, that the Messiah could never die: an

opinion that Judas might readily embrace, having seen his Master raise several persons, and among the rest one who had been in the grave no less than four days.

Another reason which may be assigned, in confirmation of this opinion, is the traitor's hanging himself, when he found him condemned, not by the governor, but by the council, whose prerogative it was to judge prophets. Had Judas proposed to take away the life of his Master, the sentence of condemnation passed upon him, instead of filling him with despair, must have gratified him, being the accomplishment of his project: whereas, the light wherein we have endeavored to place his conduct, shows this circumstance to have been perfectly natural.

He knew him to be thoroughly innocent, and expected that he would have wrought such miracles before the council as should have constrained them to believe. Therefore, when he found that nothing of this kind was done, and that the priests had passed the sentence of condemnation upon him, and were carrying him to the governor to get it executed, he repented of his rash and covetous project, came to the chief priests and elders, the persons to whom he had betrayed him, offered them their money again, and solemnly declared the deepest conviction of his Master's innocence, hoping that they would have desisted from the persecution. But they were obstinate, and would not relent: upon which his remorse arose to such a pitch, that, unable to support the torments of his conscience, he went and hanged himself.

Thus, it is probable that the traitor's intention in delivering up his Master, was not to get him punished with death, but only to lay him under a necessity of proving his pretensions before the grandees, whom he had hitherto shunned; thinking, that if they had yielded, the whole nation would immediately have been raised forthwith to the summit of their expectations.

This account of Judas' conduct is by no means calculated to lessen the foulness of his crime, which was the blackest imaginable. For even in the light above mentioned, it implied both an insatiable avarice, and a wilful opposition to the councils of Providence, and rendered the actor of it a disgrace to human nature. But it is calculated to set the credibility of the traitor's action in a proper light, and to show that he was not moved to it by any thing suspicious in the character of his Master: because, according to his view of it, his perfidy, instead of implying that he entertained suspicions of his Master's integrity, plainly proves that he had the fullest conviction of his being the Messiah. Nor was it pos-

sible for any one, who had been present at the miracles which Jesus wrought, and the doctrines which he delivered, to admit of a doubt of his being the Son of God, the Saviour of mankind; unless blinded by the most obstinate prejudice.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Jesus institutes the Sacrament in commemoration of his Death and Sufferings.—Settles a dispute which arose among his Disciples.—Predicts Peter's cowardice in denying his Master.—Fortifies his Disciples against the approaching shock.—Foretels Peter's cowardice again.—Preaches to, and prays with, his Disciples for the last time.—Passionate address of our Lord to his Father, in the Garden.

THE great Redeemer, ever mindful of the grand design of his mission, even the salvation of lost and perishing sinners, was not in the least affected by the treachery of his apostate disciple. For, knowing that he must become a sacrifice for sin, &c. he instituted the sacrament of his supper, to perpetuate the memory of it throughout all ages. Accordingly, as they were eating the paschal supper, "Jesus took bread, and blessed it and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat: this is my body." *Matt.* xxvi. 26. Observe this rite no longer in remembrance of your deliverance from Egypt, but in remembrance of me; who by dying for you, will bring you out of the spiritual bondage, a bondage far worse than the Egyptian, under which your fathers groaned, and will establish you in the glorious liberty of the children of God. Do it in remembrance of me, who, by laying down my life, will ransom you from sin, from death, from hell, and will set open the gates of heaven to you, that you may enter immortality in triumph.

Having given the bread to his disciples, he also took the cup, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." *Matt.* xxvi. 27, 28. All of you, and all of my disciples, in all ages, must drink of this cup, because it represents my blood shed for the remission of the sins of mankind: my blood by which the new covenant between God and man is ratified. It is, therefore, my blood of the new covenant; so that this institution exhibits to your joyful meditation, the

THE LAST SUPPER.

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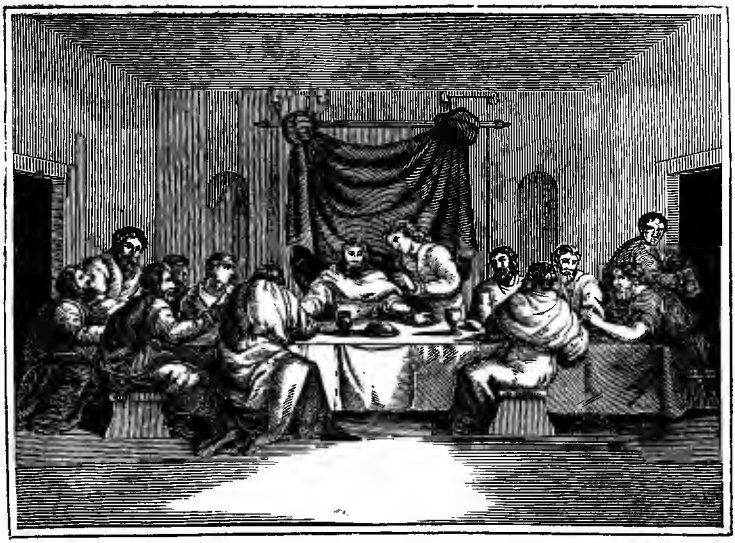

"And he took bread and gave thanks, and brake it and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood which is shed for you."—LUKE XXII. 19, 20.

grand basis of the hopes of the children of men, and perpetuates the memory of it to the end of the world. He added, "I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." *Matt.* xxvi. 29.

The manifestation of the Son of God is the most illustrious, the most momentous event that is possible to engage the meditations of mankind. To his life and death, his resurrection and ascension into glory, we are indebted for our hopes and assurances of pardon, for our peace, for our happiness. To procure our benefit, he made the most amazing condescension from the dignity he enjoyed with his Father, by putting on the veil of flesh: he poured divine instruction from his lips, and shone forth with an all-perfect, and all-lovely example. For our benefit, he submitted to a course of the most cruel treatment from his bitter enemies, to the agonies of the cross, and to the stroke of the king of terrors. For our benefit he arose again with power and lustre, ascended into the mansions of eternal happiness, manages our affairs with the Almighty, and holdeth the reins of government. With the greatest wisdom and goodness, therefore, this beneficent Jesus instituted a rite that should recall his love to our memories, and awake each pious passion in our breast; a rite, which, by the breaking of bread, and the pouring out of wine, should represent to us, in a striking manner, that most signal proof of the affection both of him and his heavenly Father, when his tender frame was exposed to wounds and bruises, when streams of the most precious blood issued from his sacred veins.

The more we reflect on this instance of divine love, the more we shall perceive that there was a peculiar propriety in pointing out by a particular ordinance, a fact of such immense importance in the system of revelation. Nay, we may venture to conjecture, that in some dark and corrupt ages, when the scriptures were but little known by the common people, and hardly studied by the priests, the death of our Saviour would have been almost forgotten, had not the remembrance of it been renewed by the celebration of this sacred ordinance.

It should also be remembered, that the vanities of the world, the allurements of sensual pleasure, the charms of ambition, the splendor of riches; in short, temptations from present objects of every kind, have often too fatal an influence on our temper and conduct. They have a fatal aptitude to draw the soul aside to folly, and to obliterate the impression of things divine. It was therefore a wise, a kind intention of our great Redeemer, by a frequent repetition of the sacramental feast, to call back the wandering heart of man to a sense of his duty and obligations as a Christian.

Besides, though the religion of the immaculate Jesus is altogether gentle, generous, and beneficent; though its whole tendency is to correct the passions, sweeten the dispositions, and enlarge the affections of men; and though it enforces all this upon us by motives surprisingly powerful and affecting; yet such is the perverseness of the human heart, that jealousies and contentions, envy, wrath, and malice, too often find admittance there. Was it not then an instance of our Saviour's wisdom and benevolence, by uniting us together at the sacrament of his body and blood, to urge the putting away all bitterness, anger, evil speaking, and revenge; and to inspire us with condescension, compassion, and love?

How careful, therefore, ought we to be in performing this duty appointed by our dying Saviour! We should, in order to receive it worthily, employ our meditation on the design and excellency of the Gospel; on the noble system of the doctrines and duties it contains; on the illustrious, divine, and complete example of the blessed Jesus; on the important privileges, the valuable promises, and the ravishing prospects his revelation affords; and on the bright and convincing evidence with which it is attended.

We should contemplate that essential and unparalleled benevolence of the Father in forming the means of our redemption; on the readiness manifested by the Son of God in undertaking our cause; and on his wonderful transactions in the prosecution of this grand, this amazing work. Above all, we should impress upon our souls a strong sense of the special and immediate purposes for which this sacrament was appointed.

When we actually join in communion, we should be careful that our affections be properly directed and warmly engaged. To have our hearts fixed upon the vanities, the profits, and the cares of this world, is a direct violation of the ordinance: and therefore we should be extremely careful to maintain a right temper and behaviour at that time. We should study to abstract our thoughts as much as possible from every foreign, every terrestrial consideration, and to have our passions fervently employed in the solemn service. "Retire, O my soul (each of us should say) from this inferior scene of things; from all its pleasures and all its pursuits, and hold communion with the Almighty, and his Son, the immaculate Jesus. Meditate upon that infinite grace of Omnipotence, which formed the amazing plan that displayed pardon, peace, and endless happiness, to so undeserving a creature as thou art. Recollect that surprising condescension and tenderness of thy compassionate Redeemer, which induced him to bring down from heaven salvation to the sons of men. Call to mind the admirable instructions he offered, the charming pattern he exhibited, the hard labors and suf-

ferings he endured, in the course of his ministry; especially, call to mind the ignominy, the reproaches, the agonies, he endured when he hung upon the cross, and purchased for thee eternal mercy. Think upon these affecting subjects, till thine heart is filled with sorrow for thine iniquities; till thy faith becomes lively, active, and fruitful; till thy gratitude and love are elevated to the highest pitch: till thy obedience is rendered uniform, steady, and complete. Hast thou, O my God, the parent of universal nature!—hast thou so illustriously manifested thy compassion for sinners, as not to spare thine own Son: hast thou sent the Saviour into the lower world, in order to raise the children of men to immortality, perfection, and glory: and am I now in thy presence on purpose to celebrate this institution, which requireth me to commemorate the death of the great Messiah; to declare my public acceptance of his excellent revelation, and my regard to my Christian brethren? May then the remembrance of his beneficence dwell upon my mind, and upon my tongue, for ever and ever! May I consider and comply with the intention of his Gospel; and may the sentiments of kindness and charity towards all my fellow mortals, and fellow disciples, reign in my breast, with increasing purity, with increasing zeal."

Such are the views that should possess our souls, when we partake of this sacred ordinance; but it will signify little to entertain these views, at that time, unless the effects of them are apparent in our future conduct and conversation: for a transient flow of affections, or sallies of immediate delight, were not principally intended in this institution.

The blessed Jesus did not ordain it as a ceremony or charm, but as a proper method of establishing our hearts in the fear and love of God, who gave his only beloved Son to die for wretched sinners. Though ye have, therefore, O Christians, obeyed the Redeemer's command in this appointment, and found your passions greatly moved, yet this is not the whole required at your hands; it will justly be expected that ye should live to the honor of your divine Master. As you have solemnly professed your faith in him, and your love towards him, the reality of your faith and love should be demonstrated by walking more strictly in the way of his precepts, and by abounding in that heavenly character and temper which his spotless example so engagingly recommends. Thus only will the sacrament become subservient to the most beneficial purposes. Thus only will it be instrumental in qualifying us for sharing in the dignity and felicity possessed by our exalted Saviour.

May therefore all the followers of the immaculate Jesus, by uniting together at his sacred table, advance from holiness to holiness, till they arrive at the regions of eternal felicity!

Our blessed Saviour, after delivering the sacramental cup, and telling them that his blood was shed for them, mentioned the treachery of Judas a second time: "Behold, he is at hand that doth betray me." *Matt.* xxvi. 46. This second declaration was made very properly after the institution of the sacrament, which exhibits the highest instance of our great Redeemer's love to mankind, his dying to obtain the remission of their sins; for it abundantly proves that the person who could be deliberately guilty of such an injury to so kind a friend, must have been a monster, the foulness of whose ingratitude cannot be described by the force of language.

Some of the disciples, particularly struck with horror at the thought of Judas' treachery, rebuked him, by asking him, with surprise, how he could betray his Master? This accusation Judas no doubt repelled, by impudently denying the fact: but consciousness of guilt giving edge to the reproaches of his brethren, and to every circumstance of the affair, he immediately left the company, exceedingly displeased at thinking himself insulted and affronted.

The important, the awful scene now approached, when the great work was to be finished. The traitor, Judas, was gone to the chief priests and elders, for a band of soldiers to apprehend him; but this did not discompose the Redeemer of mankind: he took occasion to meditate on the glory that would accrue, both to himself and the Almighty, from those sufferings, and spake of it to his disciples. "Now," said he, "is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." He told them that, having already done honor to his Father by the past actions of his life, and being about to honor him yet farther by his sufferings and death, which would display his perfections, particularly his infinite love to the human race, in the most astonishing and amiable light, he was in his turn to receive honor from his Father; intimating that his human nature was to be exalted to the right hand of Omnipotence; and that his mission from God was to be supported by irrefragable attestations. But his disciples, imagining that he spake of the glory of a temporal kingdom, their ambition was again revived, and they began to dispute with as much keenness as ever, which of them should be the greatest in that kingdom. This contention Jesus suppressed by the arguments he had formerly used for the same purpose. Among the Gentiles, said he, they are reckoned the greatest who have the greatest power, and have exercised it in the most absolute manner: but your greatness shall be very different from theirs; it shall not consist in being unlimited with regard to tyrannical power, even though it should be joined with an affectation of titles, which denote qualities truly honorable; but whosoever desires to be great, or chief among you,

let him be so by his humility, and the service he renders to the rest, in imitation of me, your Master, whose greatness consists in this, that I am become the servant of you all. Adding, as they had continued with him in this temptation, he would bestow upon them such a kingdom as his Father had appointed for him. At the same time, to check their ambition, and lead them to form a just notion of his kingdom, he told them, that he was soon to leave them, and that whither he was going, they could not at that time follow him; for which reason, instead of contending with one another which of them should be the greatest, they would do well to be united among themselves, in the happy bond of love. For by loving one another sincerely and fervently, they would prove themselves his disciples, to the conviction of mankind, who could not be ignorant that love was a distinguishing part of his character.

This is termed a new commandment, not because mutual love had never been enjoined on mankind before, but because it was a precept of peculiar excellency; for the word, translated *new*, in the Hebrew language denotes excellency and truth; he also called this a new commandment, because they were to exercise it under a new relation, according to a new measnre, and from new motives. They were to love one another, in the relation of his disciples, and in that degree of love which he had showed to them; for they were to lay down their lives for their brethren.

This excellent doctrine, however, did not make such an impression on Peter, as the words which Jesus had spoken concerning a place whither his disciples could not come. He therefore replied by asking where he was going. To which Jesus answered, "Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now: but thou shalt follow me afterward."

In order to make his disciples farther humble, watchful, and kindly affectionate one towards another, he assured them that Satan was seeking to ruin them all by his temptations: "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Peter was greatly offended that his Master should have singled him out as the weakest; for so he interpreted his praying for him particularly; and supposing that he mentioned Satan's seeking to sift him, as the thing which would hinder him from following his Master, replied, Why cannot I follow thee now? Is there any road more terrible than the dark valley of the shadow of death? Yet through these black and gloomy shades, I am willing this moment to accompany thee.

Jesus knowing his weak, though sincere, resolution, answered, Art thou so very confident of thine own strength? I tell thee,

that this very night, before the cock crows, thou shalt thrice deny me to be thy Master.

Our blessed Saviour having finished what he had to say to Peter in particular, turned himself to his other disciples, and put them in mind that when they were first sent out, he directed them to rely wholly upon the Almighty for assistance. When I sent you formerly, said he, to preach the Gospel, you may remember I ordered you to go without any provision, either for your sustenance or defence, assuring you, that though you would indeed meet with great opposition, yet Providence would dispose some men in all places to be your friends, and to furnish you with all necessaries: and accordingly you found that you wanted for nothing, but were wonderfully supported, without any care or provision of your own, in the whole journey, and finished your work with success. But now the case is very different: the time of that greatest trial and distress, whereof I have often forewarned you, is just at hand: and you may now make all the provision in your power, and arm yourselves against it, as much as you are able.

I have finished the work for which I was sent into the world: and nothing now remains for me, but to undergo those sufferings which the prophets have foretold concerning me, and to complete this whole dispensation of Providence, by submitting at last to a cruel and ignominious death.

The disciples, thinking their great Master meant that they should arm themselves in a literal sense, and endeavor to oppose the assaults that would shortly be made upon them by the Jews, answered, "Lord, here are two swords:" but the blessed Jesus, who only intended to convey an idea of their approaching distress and temptations, and to arm them against the surprise, replied, "It is enough;" you need not trouble yourselves about any more weapons of this nature for defence.

Be not terrified and disconsolate, added the compassionate Jesus, because I have told you that I must undergo great sufferings, and be taken away from you for a time. You have always been taught, to believe in God, who is the Almighty Preserver and Governor of all things: and to rely on him for deliverance in every affliction and distress.

Learn now, in like manner, to believe in me, who have all power committed to me, as a preserver and head of my church; and trust in me to accomplish fully all things that I have promised you. If you do this, and persist steadfastly in the belief of my doctrine, and in the obedience of my commands, nothing in this vale of misery, not even persecution, or death itself, shall be able to hinder you from attaining the happiness I have proposed to you. For in heaven, my Father's house, there is abundant room to receive you: otherwise I would not have filled

your minds with the hopes and expectation of happiness. But as there are mansions sufficient for you in another state, you may with confidence and assurance hope for the full accomplishment of my promises, notwithstanding all this present world may contrive or act against you. And ye ought also to bear patiently my departure from you, at this time; since I only leave you to prepare a place, and open the portals of those eternal habitations where I shall be ever with you. When I have prepared a place for you in that eternal state, I will again return, and take you to myself. Nor shall you ever more be separated from me, but continue with me to all eternity, in full participation of my eternal glory and happiness, in the blissful regions of the heavenly Canaan. You must now surely know whither I am going, and the way that leads to these happy seats of immortality.

But the disciples, whose minds were not yet fully weaned from the expectation of a temporal power and glory, did not understand this discourse of their great and beloved Master. Accordingly Thomas replied, Lord, we cannot comprehend whither thou art going; and therefore must needs be ignorant of the way.

To which the blessed Jesus answered, I myself, as I have often told you, am the true and only way to life; nor can any man go thither by any other way. If ye say, you do not know the Father, I tell you, that no man who knoweth me, can be ignorant of my Father, of his will, and the manner of pleasing him: if ye know me, you must know that all my actions have been directed by the will of the Father, and for the glory of his name.

Philip answered, Lord, show us but once the Father, and we shall be fully satisfied.

Jesus replied, Have I been so long with you, Philip, and yet thou art a stranger to him who sent me? I tell you, that to know one, is to be acquainted with both. What then can you mean by desiring to see the Father, as if you could be still ignorant of him, after being so long acquainted with me? Be assured, Philip, that whatsoever I speak is the declaration of his will, and whatsoever I do is the operation of his power. And if you refuse to believe my own affirmation, yet, at least, let my works convince you; for they carry in them undeniable evidences of a divine power. "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father." *John*, xiv. 12.

Surely then you have matter sufficient to comfort and support your spirits, under the thoughts of my departure from you. Ye have abundant reason to believe that I have power to perform all the promises I have made you; and the design of my

departure actually to perform them. When I am returned to my Father, ye shall soon receive sufficient pledges of my care and remembrance of you. Ye shall be endued with power not only to perform the same works ye have seen me do, as healing diseases, giving sight to the blind, casting out devils, and the like, for the conviction of the Jews; but even to do greater things than these; to speak with all kinds of tongues, and to propagate my religion among the Gentiles, even through all the nations of the earth.

And whatsoever ye shall ask of my Father, in my name, as being my disciples, and in order to promote the work of the Gospel, shall certainly be granted you. That God may be greatly glorified by the extraordinary success and spreading of the religion of his Son, I say, that whatsoever ye shall ask, I will take care, after my return to the Father, that it shall be granted you. Only ye must remember, as the necessary condition upon which all depends, that ye be careful, above all things, to continue steadfast and immoveable in your obedience to my commands: this is the only true mark you can give of the sincerity of your love towards me; it is more than your grieving at my departure, or any other external indication of zeal whatsoever.

The Father, I say, shall send you another advocate and comforter, even his Holy Spirit, the author and teacher of truth, who shall guide and direct, assist and comfort you in all cases. This Spirit the sensual and corrupt world cannot receive; having no knowledge of the divine truths or disposition to be governed by them. But ye know them, and are disposed to entertain them. The spirit of the Father is already within you, by a secret and invisible efficacy; and shall hereafter appear in you openly, by great and visible manifestations.

Thus, though I must depart from you, yet I do by no means leave you comfortless. I leave you with a promise of the Holy Spirit; and I leave you in expectation also of my own return. For though, after a very little while, I shall appear no more to the world, yet to you I will appear again; for I shall live again, and ye also shall live with me.

When, therefore, I have conquered and triumphed over death, ye shall understand more fully, and it shall appear more visible, by great and manifest effects, that I act in all things agreeably to my Father's will, and am perfectly invested with his power; and that ye in like manner, have my power and commission communicated to you; so that there is a perfect unity and communion between us. Only ye must remember, that the one necessary condition on which all depends, is, that ye continue steadfast and immoveable in your faith in me, and in your obedience to my commands. He, and he only, who embraces my

doctrine, and obeys and practises it, shall be judged to be sincere in his love towards me. And he who loves me in that manner, shall be loved by my Father; and I myself also will love him, and manifest myself to him.

Here Judas Thaddeus interrupted his Master, saying, Lord, why wilt thou choose to manifest thyself to us, a few particular persons, and not to the generality of the world?

Jesus replied, I have already told you the reason for my acting in this manner; because the generality of the world are not disposed to obey my commandments, the necessary condition of maintaining communion with me. But ye are disposed to embrace my doctrine, and to obey it; and, therefore, I manifest myself to you. And whoever else will so love me as to keep my commandments, him also will I and my Father love, and will maintain communion with him, and all spiritual blessings shall be poured down upon him, and he shall be made a partaker of happiness and eternal life.

On the contrary, whoever loves me not, that is, obeys not my commandments, shall have no intercourse or communion with me. Neither will my Father love or honor him, or make any manifestations of himself to him; for as my commandments are not my own, but the Father's commandments; therefore, whoever dishonors me, my Father will look upon him as dishonoring himself.

These things have I briefly spoken to you now, according to the shortness of the time I am to continue with you, and to comfort you for the present, against my departure. But when the Comforter whom I promised you, is come, even the Holy Spirit, whom my Father shall send you on my account, he shall instruct you more fully, recalling to your remembrance what you have forgotten, explaining what is yet obscure, and supplying what is farther necessary to be taught you, and to be understood by you.

In the mean time I take my leave of you, and my blessing I leave with you: not formally, and after the common fashion of the world, but affectionately and sincerely; retaining a careful remembrance of you, and with an earnest desire and intention of returning again speedily to you. Wherefore, be not overmuch grieved for me at my departure, nor fearful of what may then befall yourselves. I go away from you, but it is with an intention as I have already told you, to return to you again. If you loved me with a wise and understanding affection, ye would rejoice, instead of grieving at my present departure; because I am going to my Father, the supreme author of all glory and happiness.

These things have I now told you before they come to pass, that when ye see them happen, your faith in me, and your ex-

pectation of the performance of all my promises, may be confirmed and strengthened: the time will not allow me to say much more to you, at present: my end draweth near, the ruler of this world, the prince of the power of darkness, is at this instant employing all his wicked instruments to apprehend and destroy me. Not that either the power of the devil, or the malice of man, can at all prevail over me, but because the time of my suffering, according to the appointment of divine wisdom, is arrived; and that I may demonstrate to the world my love and obedience to my Father, I willingly submit myself to be put to death by the hands of sinful and cruel men. Rise up, let us be going, that I may enter on my sufferings.

Having thus spoken, they finished the passover, with singing a hymn, and went out to the Mount of Olives.

On their arrival at the place which was to be the scene of his sufferings, he desired them to fortify themselves by prayer, and forewarned them of the terrible effects his sufferings would have upon them: they would make them all stumble, that very night, agreeably to the prophecy of Zechariah: "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad." To strengthen their faith, therefore, he not only mentioned his own resurrection, but told them they should see him in Galilee, after he was risen from the dead.

On our blessed Saviour's mentioning the offence that his disciples would take at his suffering, Peter recollected what had been said to him in particular, before they left the house. Grieved, therefore, afresh, to find his Master entertain such thoughts of him, and being now armed with a sword, the vehemence of his temper urged him to boast a second time of his courageous and close attachment to his Master. "Though all men," said he, "should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." But Jesus knowing that human confidence and security were weak and frail, thought proper to forewarn him again of his danger, and told him, that the cock should not crow before he had denied him.

Peter, however, still continued to repeat his confidence, I will die with thee, but never deny thee. The disciples all joined with Peter in professing their fixed resolution of suffering death, rather than they would deny their Master; but the event fully confirmed the prediction of our Saviour. From hence we may learn, how ignorant men are of their own hearts, and that the strongest resolutions in their own strength avail nothing.

The compassionate Redeemer of mankind, not willing to lose one single moment of the short time of his ministry that yet remained, continued to instruct his disciples in the great truths he came into the world to explain: and from the vines which were growing round him on the Mount of Olives, he began his ex-

cellent discourse, with the parable of the vine, to the following import.

Hitherto, said the blessed Jesus, the Jewish church and nation have been the peculiar care of Providence; as a choice and goodly vine, like to bring forth much fruit, is the special care of the husbandman. But from henceforth, my church, my disciples, and the professors of my religion, of what country or nation soever they be, shall become the people of God, and the peculiar care of divine Providence. I will be to them as the root and stock of a vine, of which they are the branches, and my Father the husbandman and vine-dresser.

As in the management of a choice vine, the skilful vine-dresser cuts off all barren and superfluous branches, that they may not burden nor exhaust the tree, and prunes and dresses the fruitful branches, that they may grow continually, and bear more fruit; so, in the government of my church, all useless, wicked, and incorrigible members, my Father, by his judgment, cuts off and destroys; but those who are sincerely pious and good, he, by the various and merciful dispensations of his Providence towards them, tries, purifies, and amends, that they may daily improve, and be more and more abundant in all good works.

Now ye, my apostles, are such members as these, being purified in heart and mind, and prepared for every good work, by your lively faith in me, and sincere resolutions to obey my commands. Continue steadfastly in this state, and then you may be sure of deriving all spiritual blessings from me, as the branches receive sap and nourishment from the vine. But as a branch, without continuing in the vine, cannot bear any fruit, but presently dries up and perishes: so ye, unless ye continue steadfast in your communion with me, by a lively faith and sincere obedience, so as to receive grace and spiritual blessings, can never bring forth any good fruit of true holiness and righteousness, but will fall into vanity, superstition, and wickedness, and, at last, utterly perish.

I am, as it were, I say, the root and stock of the vine, whereof ye are the branches. He that continues to adhere to me, by a constant faith in me, shall bring forth much fruit unto everlasting life; even as a branch which continues to grow in a vine, and receives sap and nourishment from it. But he that does not continue his relation o me in this manner, is a false and useless professor, and shall be cast out from me, and perish for ever; even as a fruitless branch is cut off from the vine, and left to wither and dry, and is, at last, burned in the fire.

If you continue in me, by believing my words, and holding fast what ye believe, and obeying and practising it accordingly; no power or malice, either of man or of devils, shall be able to hurt you, or oppose your doctrines. For though I be absent

from you in body, yet I will hear your prayers, and my Father himself, also, will hear you: and whatsoever ye shall ask, for the glory of the Almighty, and the propagation of my true religion in the world, shall certainly be granted you. But above all things carefully remember to demonstrate your continuance in me, by abounding in all good works of holiness, righteousness, and charity. This is the honor which my Father desires and expects from you; even as it is the glory and desire of a vine-dresser, that his vine should bring forth much fruit. And this is the honor that I myself expect from you, that ye should prove yourselves to be really and indeed my disciples, by imitating my example, and obeying my commands. This ye are bound to do, not only in duty, but in gratitude also; for as my Father hath loved me, so have I also loved you; and ye in like manner ought to love me again, that you may continue to be loved by me. But the way to express your love towards me, and to continue to be loved by me, is to keep my commandments; even as I, by keeping my Father's commandments, have expressed my love towards him, and continue to be loved by him.

These things have I spoken to you before my departure, that the comfort ye have taken in my presence, may be continued in my absence, and even increased to the coming of the Holy Spirit, as it will be upon this condition, which I have so often repeated to you, that you keep my commandments. And the principal of these commandments is, that ye love one another; not after the common fashion of the world, but in such a manner as I have loved you; nor can you be ignorant what sort of love that is, when I tell you that I am now going to lay down my life for you. This is the highest instance, in which it is possible for a man to express his love towards his greatest friends and benefactors: but this I am now going to do for you, and for all mankind. I do not consider you as my benefactors, but as my friends, upon this condition only, that ye keep my commandments. I might, indeed, justly call you servants, considering the infinite distance between me and you, and the obligation ye have to obey my commandments; but I have not treated you as servants who are not admitted into their Master's counsels, but as friends, revealing to you the whole will of my Father, with all freedom and plainness.

I have, I say, behaved myself to you, as to the nearest friends. Not that you first obliged me, or did any acts of kindness for me, but I have freely, and of my own good pleasure, chosen you to be my apostles, and the preachers of my Gospel, that you may go and declare the will of God to the world, and bring forth much and lasting fruit in the conversion of men to the knowledge of the truth, and to the profession and practice

of true religion and virtue. In the performance of this work, whatsoever ye shall ask of my Father, in my name, in order to enable you to perform it effectually and with full success, shall certainly be granted you.

Now all these things which I have spoken unto you concerning the greatness of my love towards you, in choosing you to be my apostles, in revealing unto you the whole will of my Father, and in laying down my life for you; I have urged and inculcated upon you for this reason chiefly, as I at first told you, that ye may learn, after my example to "love one another." The world, indeed, you must expect will hate and persecute you, upon my account. But this you ought not to be surprised or terrified at, knowing that it is no worse treatment than I myself have met with before you.

Be not, therefore, surprised when ye meet with opposition; nor think to find better treatment in the world than I myself have done. Remember what I have already told you, that the disciple is not above his Master; nor is he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If men had generally and readily embraced my doctrine, you might, indeed, have had some reason to expect that they would willingly have received your's also. But since I myself have suffered great indignities and persecutions from wicked and perverse, from obstinate and incorrigible men, only for opposing their vices, it is highly reasonable that you should expect to undergo the like treatment upon the like account. In all which sufferings you will, moreover, have this further comfortable consideration to support you, that the justice of your own cause, and the injustice of your persecutors, will by that means most evidently appear; seeing ye are persecuted only for professing and preaching in my name the doctrine of true religion and virtue; and they persecute you only because they know not God, and out of mere malice will not bear to be instructed in his commands.

Indeed, had not I appeared to the world with all possible demonstrations of authority and truth, teaching men a most holy and undeniable doctrine, sufficient to reform their manners and amend their lives, and moreover demonstrating my divine commission by such proofs as ought to satisfy and convince the most doubting and suspicious minds, they might have had some plea and excuse of ignorance for their unbelief. But now, since all reasonable evidence has been offered them, and proper methods used for their conversion and salvation, and yet they wilfully and obstinately reject these means of grace, it is plain they have no excuse for their sin; but they oppose and persecute you only because they will not forsake their worldly lusts, and out of mere malice will not bear to be instructed in the commands of the Almighty. So that they who oppose and perse-

cute you, as they have before persecuted me, show plainly that they are haters of God, and of his most holy commandments. Which is, as I have already told you, a plain evidence of the justice of your own cause, and of the injustice of your persecutors.

If I had not, I say, done such works among them as no man ever did, they might, indeed, have had some appearance of excuse for their sin. But now, having seen abundant proofs of my authority, and undeniable evidence of the truth of my doctrine, and yet wilfully and obstinately persisting to oppose it, because inconsistent with their lusts, it is plain that their dishonoring me is a dishonor done to God himself, and a direct contempt of his commands: so that they are utterly inexcusable. But it is no wonder, when men have given themselves wholly up to be governed by worldly affections, passions, and vices, they should act contrary to all the reason and evidence in the world. For this is but the natural consequence of obstinate and habitual wickedness; and hereby is only fulfilled in me what holy David long since prophetically complained of, that they hated him without a cause.

But notwithstanding all the opposition that wicked and incorrigible men will make against my doctrine, there will not be wanting powerful promoters of it who shall effectually overcome all opposition. For the Comforter, whom I said I will send you from heaven, even that "spirit of truth," which cometh forth, and is sent from the Father, shall, when he cometh, with wonderful efficacy bear testimony to the truth of my doctrine, and cause it to be spread through the world with incredible success. Nay, and ye yourselves, also, though now so weak, fearful and doubting, shall then very powerfully bear testimony to the truth of all the things, whereof ye, having been all along present with me, have been eye-witnesses from the beginning.

Thus have I warned you beforehand, of the opposition and persecution ye must expect to meet with in the world, that when it cometh, ye may not be surprised and terrified, so as to be discouraged thereby from persisting in the performance of your duty.

Ye must expect, particularly, that the chief priests, and rulers of the Jews, men of great hypocrisy and superstition, zealous for their ceremonies and ritual traditions, but careless to know and obey the will of Omnipotence in matters of great and eternal obligation, and invincibly prejudiced against the spiritual holiness and purity of my doctrine; these, I say, you must expect will excommunicate you as apostates, and cast you out of all their societies, as the vilest of malefactors. Nay, to such an absurd height of malice will their superstition carry them, that they will even fancy they promote the service of God, and the

cause of religion, when they most barbarously murder and destroy you. But I have warned you of all this, beforehand, that ye may prepare and fortify yourselves against it; and that when it cometh to pass, ye may remember, I foretold it to you, and your faith in me may thereby be strengthened.

It was needless to acquaint you with these scenes of suffering, while I was with you: but now being about to leave you, I think it necessary to acquaint you what things are likely to come upon you after my departure, and also, at the same time, what comfort you may expect to support you under them.

Now I must mention the melancholy part, namely, that I am going from you, and that great temptations will befall you in my absence: this, indeed, ye readily apprehend, and suffer yourselves to be overwhelmed with grief at the thoughts of it. But the comfortable part of my discourse, namely, that my departure is only in order to return to him that sent me, and that I will soon after send you the Holy Spirit, and the other advantages that will thence result to you, are neither considered, nor are you solicitous about them. Nevertheless, if ye will listen, I will plainly tell you the truth. Ye are so far from having reason to be dejected at the thoughts of my departure, that, on the contrary, it is really profitable and expedient for you, that I should now depart: for such is the order and dispensation of Providence towards you, and the appointment of my Father's eternal and all-wise counsel, that before I go and take possession of my kingdom, the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, cannot be sent unto you; but when I am departed from you, and have all power in heaven and in earth committed unto me, then I will send him unto you. And when he cometh, he shall abundantly support and comfort you under all your troubles; shall powerfully plead your cause against your adversaries; and shall, with wonderful efficacy, cause the doctrine of the Gospel to spread and prevail in the world, against all opposition. He shall particularly, and in a most extraordinary and convincing manner, make the world sensible of the greatness and heinousness of a sin of which they were not aware; of the righteousness and justice of a dispensation they did not understand, and of the execution of a most remarkable judgment they did not expect.

First, by wonderfully attesting and confirming the truth of my doctrine, by the gift of tongues, and other wonderful signs, he shall convince the world of the greatness and heinousness of their sins in disbelieving and rejecting me.

Secondly, by demonstrating that my departure out of the world, was not perishing and dying, but only a returning to my Father, in order to be invested with all power both in heaven and earth; he shall convince the world of the righteousness and justice of

my cause, and of the excellency of that dispensation which I preach and declare to mankind.

Lastly, by mightily destroying the power of the devil and dominion of sin, and propagating the doctrine of true religion in the world, with wonderful efficacy and success, he shall convince men of my power and authority, to execute judgment upon mine enemies, for the establishment of my kingdom upon earth.

There are yet many other things hereafter to be done in relation to the settling and establishing of my church, which, if it were proper, I would now acquaint you with; but ye are not yet prepared to understand and receive them.

Howbeit, when the Spirit of truth, whom I promised you, is come, that shall enlarge your understandings, remove your prejudices, and instruct you in all necessary and divine truths, to enable you to go through the great work which I have begun in person, and which I will carry on by your ministry, for the Spirit is not to begin any new work, or to found any new doctrine of himself. But as I have taught, and will teach you, only in my Father's name, so the Spirit shall instruct you only in mine and my Father's will, and in things necessary to promote and carry on the same design.

Every thing that he does shall be only in order to manifest my glory, and establish my religion in the world: even as every thing that I have done has been only to manifest my Father's glory and reveal his will to mankind. For as all that I have taught, is only what I received from my Father, so all that the Spirit shall teach you, is only what he receives from me.

Whatsoever, I say, the Spirit shall teach you, is only what he receives from me; for receiving from my Father, I call receiving from me, and teaching his will is teaching mine; seeing all things that the Father hath are common to me, and all power and dominion by him committed to me.

And now be careful to remember what matter for comfort I have given you, and support yourselves with it under the approaching distress. It is now indeed, but a very little while before I shall be taken away from you; nevertheless let not this cause you to despair; for, after I am departed, it will be also but a little while before I appear to you again; forasmuch as my being taken away from you, is not perishing, but only returning to my Father.

At these last words of Jesus, the disciples were greatly disturbed and troubled, not understanding his true meaning, that in a very short time he should be taken from them by death; and that after having overcome death by a glorious resurrection, he would appear to them again before his ascension into heav-

en. Not understanding this, I say, they inquired one of another, What can he mean by telling us, that in a very little time he shall be taken out of our sight; and that in a very little time more we shall see him again, and this because he goeth to the Father? We cannot understand the meaning of all this.

Jesus, observing their perplexity, and knowing that they were desirous of asking him, replied, "Why are ye thus disturbed and perplexed about what I told you? Is it a thing so very hard to be understood, that I said, within a very little time I should be taken away from you, and that within a very little time more, I should appear to you again? Verily, verily I tell you I must very soon depart out of this world. Then the world, who are your enemies, will rejoice and triumph over you, as if they had destroyed me, and wholly suppressed you; and ye, for your parts, will be overwhelmed with grief and sorrow. But within a short time I will return to you again; and then your sorrow shall be turned into exceeding great joy.

Even as a woman when she is in labor, hath great pain and sorrow for the present, but as soon as she is delivered, forgets all her sufferings, and rejoices greatly at the birth of her son; so ye, while ye are under the immediate apprehension of my departure from you, and during that time of distress and temptation, which shall befall you in my absence, will be full of sorrow and anxiety of mind; but when I return to you again, then shall ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and no power or malice of man shall ever be able to take from you any more the cause or continuance of it.

But though I shall return to you again, and your hearts will thereupon be filled with inexpressible joy, and which never shall be taken from you any more; yet there will be no necessity that I should then continue long with you in person, to instruct you upon every occasion, as I have now done, with my own mouth. For besides that the Holy Spirit will be sent to instruct you in all things necessary, my Father himself also will hear your petitions, and be ready to grant you whatsoever you shall desire of him in my name, and as being my disciples.

Hitherto ye have asked nothing of God in my name; but from henceforth put up your petitions in my name; and whatsoever ye shall so ask for the glory of God, and in order to enable you to go through the work of your ministry successfully, shall certainly be granted you; that your joy, which will begin at my appearing to you again after my death, may be completed by the wonderful success and efficacy of your own ministry.

These things I have told you at present, imperfectly and obscurely, according as your capacities are able to bear them. But the time is coming, when I will speak to you with more openness, freedom, and plainness, the whole will of my Father concerning the nature and establishment of my kingdom, and for what things, and in what manner ye ought to pray unto him.

At that time ye shall with firm assurance pray to my Father in my name for what ye want. And I need not tell you, that I will intercede with the Father on your behalf; for besides the love he has borne for me, and the power and authority my prayers have with him, he has moreover of himself a great love for you, and a ready disposition to grant your prayers, because ye are become grateful and acceptable to him, by your love towards me, which ye have shown in embracing willingly that holy doctrine which I have revealed to you from him.

To conclude: the sum of what I have told you is briefly and plainly this. I came down from heaven from God my Father, and have lived upon earth in the state of frail and mortal man, that I might reveal to mankind the will of my heavenly Father, and the way to attain eternal life and happiness; and now having finished this great work, I am about to leave this world, and return again to my Father, from whence I at first came.

These last words of Jesus, being more plain and express than any he had before spoken, so that now the disciples clearly perceived, that the departure he had so often mentioned was no other than his actual going out of this world, they replied, Now, Lord, you speak plainly and without any figure; so that we apprehend fully what you mean. And now that our curiosity is satisfied, you have likewise greatly confirmed our faith: having given us a certain token whereby we are assured that you know all things, even the hearts and secret thoughts of men; since you have answered us a question which gave us great perplexity, and we were desirous to ask your opinions, but were afraid: but now we are convinced, that you are endued with a truly divine power, and did, indeed, come forth from God.

To which Jesus answered, and do you now at length firmly believe in me? Are ye resolved to continue steadfast in this faith? Do you think yourselves able to persevere immoveably in the profession of it? Be not confident of your own strength; but pray that ye may be delivered from temptation in the time of distress, such as will come upon you much sooner than ye expect. For I tell you, that ye will all of you, within a few hours, utterly forsake me, and fly in hopes to secure yourselves,

leaving me alone. And yet I should not say alone, since my Father is with me, who is more than all.

I have, therefore, acquainted you with these things beforehand, that your minds may be furnished with sufficient matter of comfort and strength to bear up under all temptations, from the consideration of my having foretold both what distress will befall you, and how ye shall terminate your victory over all your enemies. You must, indeed, expect to meet with much affliction; but let not this discourage you: I have subdued the world; follow my example, and partake of my reward.

Having thus finished this discourse, "Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven, and prayed" with great ferveney to his Father; the prayer itself is recorded in the 17th chapter of John, the substance and import of it is as follows: "Oh Almighty Father, now the time of my suffering, for which I was sent into the world, is arrived; I entreat thee support me under it, and make me triumph over death by a glorious resurrection, and ascension into heaven; that by this means the glory may redound to thee, and cause thy will to be believed and obeyed through all the world, to the salvation of mankind; according to the full intent of that office and power with which thou didst originally invest me. In order to the bringing about this great design of salvation, I have declared thy will to mankind. I have published thy precepts, and discharged the great mission intrusted to me; I have preached thy doctrine of repentance unto salvation, and have finished the work which thou sentest me to do, to the glory of thy name upon earth; and now to complete the great design, do thou, O Almighty Father, likewise glorify me with thine own self. Support me under my sufferings: let me prevail and triumph over death, by a glorious resurrection, and exalt me again to the same glory in heaven, which I had with thee before the creation of the universe. I have manifested thy will to the disciples, the men that thou gavest me out of the world. To those persons thou didst in thine infinite wisdom appoint, that thy truth should be made known. Therefore to them I have revealed the mysteries of thy kingdom, the precepts of thy Gospel, and the doctrine of thy salvation.

"And this doctrine they have willingly embraced, steadfastly adhered to, and sincerely obeyed: as they are fully satisfied and convinced, that what I taught them as from thee was really a divine doctrine, taught by thine immediate appointment and command; and that I did not preach any human invention or institution of men, but was really sent by the divine authority and commission.

"For these persons, therefore, I now pray, that as thou hast begun the work of their salvation, by my preaching and revealing to them thy will, while I have been present with them here

upon earth, so also that thou wouldst preserve them when I am departed from this world, and complete the work of their salvation by my resurrection and ascension into heaven, after my death. I do not pray for the unbelieving impenitent world, but for those who have embraced that most holy doctrine, which thou hast taught them through me by my preaching; for those who have glorified, and will glorify my name, by their ministry, and who consequently are to be esteemed as thine own, in common with me. I am now about to leave the world, in order to return to thee: but these my disciples, who continue after me, I recommend to thy divine protection, when I am gone: endue them with powers to persevere in preaching and practising the truth, and to deliver the same holy doctrines which I have given to them, that so they may remain inseparably united to me, as I am to thee. So long as I have been with them in the world, I have watched over them, and kept them from falling away, both by example, preaching, and continual admonition, according to the power and authority which thou didst commit to me; nor has any one of my apostles miscarried under my care, except that perfidious traitor, who, as the Scriptures foretold, has ungratefully conspired with my enemies to destroy me, and will perish according to his deserts. While I have continued with my disciples, I have watched over them and preserved them under mine own eye: but now, as I am going to leave the world, I beseech thee to keep and assist them by thy good Spirit, and let the expectation of their continuing under thy special care and protection, be their comfort and support in my absence. The world, indeed, will persecute and hate them on this account, as my doctrine is repugnant to their lusts and appetites, the passions, designs, and inclinations of worldly men; it must necessarily be that the vicious and incorrigible world will oppose and persecute them, as it has before persecuted me. I beseech thee, therefore, take them under thy particular care, to support them against the violence and oppression of an evil world. I do not desire that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but preserve them in it to be instruments of thy word, thy glory, and to be teachers of thy truth; nor suffer them to be either destroyed by the malice and violence, or corrupted by the evil customs and opinions, of a perverse and wicked generation.

"They are of a temper and spirit very different from the current affections and common dispositions of the world, according to the example of purity which I have set before them. Do thou preserve and increase in them that moderation and candor of mind, cause them to be thoroughly affected and impressed with that true doctrine so frequently recommended to them from my mouth, so as to express it visibly in their lives and practice, and to promote it zealously in their preaching; that they may, both

by word and good example, become worthy and successful ministers of my Gospel.

"For as thou hast sent me into the world to reveal thy will to mankind, so send I these my apostles to continue preaching the same doctrine begun by me. And the principal design of my exemplary life, constant teaching, and now voluntarily offering myself to death for it, is, to sanctify and enable them to preach with success and efficacy for the salvation of men. Neither pray I for these my apostles only, but for all others, who shall, by their preaching and practice, promote thy true religion; and being converted from the world, may, by their sincere endeavors, go on to reform others, convincing the world of the excellency of their religion, and consequently enforcing men to acknowledge the truth and divine authority thereof. For promoting which great end, I have communicated to my apostles the same power and authority of doing mighty works for the confirmation of their doctrine, and the evidence of thy truth, as thou didst communicate to me: that so I working in them, as thou hast done in me, and thus confirming with great efficacy and demonstration of the spirit, they may establish the same doctrine which I published in person, the world may, by this evidence, be convinced that I was really sent by thee, and that my disciples act by the same divine commission.

"Holy and Almighty Father, all those whom thou hast thus given me, who have heartily embraced my doctrine, and sincerely obeyed it, I desire that thou wouldest make them partakers of the same happiness with myself, and exalt them to behold the incomprehensible glory wherewith thou didst originally invest me, in thy eternal love, before the foundation of the world. The generality of mortals, O righteous Father! have not known thee, nor been willing to embrace and obey the revelation of thy will. But I have known thy will, and have made it known to my disciples, men of simplicity and honesty; and they have embraced and obeyed it. And I will continually make it known to them more and more, that they may grow up and improve in faith, in holiness, and in all good works, so as finally to arrive and cause others to arrive, at that eternal happiness, which is the effect of thy infinite love towards me, and through me towards them."

This pious and benevolent prayer being ended, Jesus and his disciples came down from the mount of Olives into a field below, called Gethsemane, through which the brook Cedron ran, and in it, on the other side of the brook, was a garden, called the garden of Gethsemane. Here he desired his disciples to sit down, till he should retire to pray, taking with him Peter, James, and John, those three select disciples, whom he had before chosen to be witnesses of his transfiguration, and now

to be eye-witnesses of his passion, leaving the other disciples at the garden door, to watch the approach of Judas and his band.

The sufferings he was on the point of undergoing were so great, that the very prospect of them terrified him, and made him express himself in this doleful exclamation, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch." On this great occasion he sustained those grievous sorrows in his soul, by which, as well as by dying on the cross, he became a sin-offering, and accomplished the redemption of mankind.

He now withdrew from them about a stone's cast, and his human nature being overburdened beyond measure, he found it necessary to retire and pray, that if it was possible, or consistent with the salvation of the world, he might be delivered from the sufferings which were then lying on him. It was not the fear of dying on the cross, which made him speak or pray in such a manner. To suppose this would infinitely degrade his character. Make his sufferings as terrible as possible, clothe them with all the aggravating circumstances of distress; the blessed Jesus, whose human nature was strengthened by being connected with the divine, could not shrink at the prospect of sufferings, or betray a weakness which many of his followers, who, though mere men, were strangers to. He addresses his divine Father with a sigh of fervent wishes that the cup might, if possible, be removed from him: in the Greek it is, "O that thou wouldest remove this cup from me!" And having first kneeled and prayed, he fell prostrate on his face, accompanying his address with due expressions of resignation, adding, immediately, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Having prayed, he returned to his disciples, and finding them asleep, he said to Peter, "Simon, sleepest thou? couldest thou not watch one hour?" Thou, who so lately didst boast of thy courage and constancy in my service, canst thou so soon forget thy Master?

But in his greatest distress he never lost sight of that kind concern he had for his disciples. "Watch ye," said he, "and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Neither was he, on those extraordinary occasions, in the least chagrined with the offences which they had committed through frailty and human weakness; on the contrary, was always willing to make excuses for them; alleging, in their defence, "that the spirit" truly "was willing, but the flesh was weak." It seems, from these particulars, that he spent some considerable time in his addresses; because the disciples fell asleep in his absence, and he himself retired again to pray; for the sorrows of our Lord continuing to increase upon him, affected him to such a degree, that he retired a second time, and prayed to the same purpose, saying, "O my

Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done:" after which he returned again to them, and found them asleep, "for their eyes were heavy."

He returned thus frequently to his disciples, that they, by reading his distress in his countenance and gesture, might be witnesses of his passion, which proves, that his pains were beyond description intense, and complicated; for he went away the third time to pray, and notwithstanding an angel was sent from heaven to comfort and strengthen him, yet they overwhelmed him, and threw him into an agony: upon which he still continued to pray more earnestly.

But the sense of his sufferings still increasing, they strained his whole body to so violent a degree, that his blood, as it were, was pressed through the pores of his skin, which they pervaded, together with his sweat, and fell down in large drops on the ground. "And he left them and went away again. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed the more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Thus did he suffer unspeakable sorrows in his soul, as long as the divine wisdom thought proper.

At length he obtained relief, being heard on account of his perfect and entire submission to the will of his heavenly Father. "And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow." This circumstance shows how much the disciples were affected with their Master's sufferings. The sensations of grief which they felt on seeing his unspeakable distress, so overpowered them, that they sunk into sleep.

Our blessed Saviour, for the last time, came to his disciples, and seeing them still asleep, he said, "Sleep on now, and take your rest; behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; behold he is at hand that doth betray me." *Matt.* xxvi. 45, &c. The event will soon be over, which causes your sorrow; I am betrayed, and ready to be delivered unto death.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The blessed Redeemer is taken by a band of Soldiers, at the information of the traitor Judas.—Heals a wound given the High Priest's servant by Simon Peter.

JUDAS, who had often resorted to the garden of Gethsemane with the disciples of our Lord, knowing the spot, and the usual time of his Master's repairing thither, informed the chief priests and elders that the proper time for apprehending Jesus was now come. They therefore sent a band of soldiers with him, and servants carrying lanterns and torches to show them the way; because, though it was always full moon at the passover, the sky might be dark with clouds, and the place whither they were going was shaded with trees. At the same time a deputation of their number accompanied the band, to see that every one did his duty.

Judas having thus received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and pharisees, they went thither with lanterns, and torches, and weapons; for they were exceeding anxious to secure and get him into their hands: and the soldiers having, perhaps, never seen Jesus before, found it necessary that Judas should distinguish him, and point him out to them by some particular sign.

The treacherous Judas went before the band, at a small distance, to prepare them for the readier execution of their office, by kissing his Master, which was the token agreed upon, that they might not mistake him, and seize a wrong person. "And he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them and drew near unto Jesus, to kiss him." Stung with remorse at the horrid engagement into which he had entered, and not being now able to retract from the execution of it, he determined to make use of art in his vile proceedings, and weakly imagined he could deceive him whom he was about to betray, on a supposition, that when he should give the kiss, it might be considered by his Master as a singular mark of his affection. When, therefore, they approached near the spot, Judas (who was at the head of the band) suddenly ran forward, and coming up with Jesus, said, "Hail, Master! and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" Before, however, Judas could make any reply, the band (who had fixed their eyes on the person he had kissed) arrived immediately, and surrounded Jesus.

The artifice and wicked design of the base and perfidious Judas are here manifestly displayed. In order to conceal his villany from his Master and his disciples, he walked hastily, and without waiting for the band, went up directly and saluted him; wishing, perhaps, to have that considered as a token for apprising him of his danger. But Jesus did not fail to convince him that he knew the meaning and intent of his salutation, saying, "Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" Judas certainly concealed his treachery so well, that Peter did not suspect him, as it is probable he would have struck at him, rather than at Malchus, the high priest's servant.

The appointed time of our Lord's sufferings being now come, he did not, as formerly, avoid his enemies; but on the contrary, on their telling him they sought Jesus of Nazareth, he replied, "I am he:" thereby intimating to them, that he was willing to put himself into their hands. At the same time to show them that they could not apprehend him without his own consent, he, in an extraordinary manner, exerted his divine power; he made the whole band fall back, and threw them to the ground. "Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said unto them, I am he. And Judas also who betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground." But the soldiers and the Jews, imagining, perhaps, that they had been thrown down by some demon or evil spirit, with whom the Jews said he was in confederacy, advanced towards him a second time. "Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? and they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he," expressing again his willingness to fall into their hands. "If, therefore, ye seek me, let these go their way." If your business be with me alone, suffer my disciples to pass: for the party had surrounded them also. He seems to have made this request to the soldiers, that the saying might be fulfilled which he spake, "of them which thou gavest me have I lost none." For as he always proportioned the trials of his people to their strength; so here he took care that the disciples should escape the storm, which none but himself could sustain.

At length one of the soldiers, more daring than the rest, rudely caught Jesus, and bound him; upon which Peter drew his sword, and smote off the ear of the high priest's servant, who probably was showing greater forwardness than the rest in this business. "Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear; the servant's name was Malchus." The enraged disciple was on the point of singly attacking the whole band, when

Jesus ordered him to sheath his sword; telling him that his unseasonable and imprudent defence might prove the occasion of his destruction. "Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." *Matt.* xxvi. 52. He told him likewise, that it implied both a distrust of God, who can always employ a variety of means for the safety of his people, and also his ignorance in the Scriptures. "Thinkest thou, said he, "that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?" *Matt.* xxvi. 53.

The word legion was a Roman military term, being the name which they gave to a body of five or six thousand men: wherefore, in regard that the band which now surrounded them was a Roman cohort, our Lord might make use of this term, by way of contrast, to show what an inconsiderable thing the cohort was, in comparison of the force he could summon to his assistance; more than twelve legions, not of soldiers, but of angels. He yet was tenderly inclined to prevent any bad consequences which might have flowed from Peter's rashness, by healing the servant, and adding, in his rebuke to him, a declaration of his willingness to suffer. "The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?"

The circumstance of his healing the ear of Malchus, by touching it, evidently implies, that no wound, or distemper, was incurable in the hands of Jesus: neither was any injury so great that he could not forgive. It seems somewhat surprising that this evident miracle did not make an impression upon the chief priests, especially as our Lord put them in mind, at the same time, of his other miracles; for having first said, "Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear and healed him:" he added, "Be ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness." *Luke*, xxii. 51, &c. The priests had kept at a distance, for some time, but drew near, when they understood that Jesus was in their power; for they were proof against all conviction, being obstinately bent on putting him to death. And the disciples, when they saw their Master in the hands of his enemies, forsook him, and fled, according to his prediction: notwithstanding they might have followed him without danger, as the priests had no design against them. "Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled. Then the band and the captain and officers took Jesus and bound him." But it was not the cord which held him; his immense charity was by far the stronger bond. He could have broken those weak ties, and

exerted his divinity in a more wonderful manner; he could have stricken them all dead, with as much ease as he had before thrown them on the ground; but he patiently submitted to this, as to every other indignity which they chose to offer him; so meek was he under the greatest injuries. Having thus secured him, they led him away. "And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young man laid hold of him; and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked." This, perhaps, was the proprietor of the garden, who being awakened with the noise, came out with the linen cloth in which he had been lying, cast round his naked body; and having a respect for Jesus, followed him, forgetting the dress he was in.

They first led him to Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. Annas having himself discharged the office of high priest, was consequently a person of distinguished character, which, together with his relation to the high priest, made him worthy of the respect they now paid him. But he refused, singly, to meddle in the affair; they therefore carried Jesus to Caiaphas himself, at whose palace the chief priests, elders, and scribes, were assembled, having staid there all night to see the issue of their stratagem. This Caiaphas was he that advised the council to put Jesus to death, even admitting he was innocent, for the safety of the whole Jewish nation. He seems to have enjoyed the sacerdotal dignity during the whole course of Pilate's government in Judea; for he was advanced by Valerius Gratus, Pilate's predecessor, and was divested of it by Vitellius, governor of Syria, after he had deposed Pilate from his procuratorship.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Fulfilment of our Lord's prediction concerning Peter.

THE apprehending of their dear Master could not but strike his disciples with horror and amazement: though he had forewarned them of that event, such was their consternation, that they fled different ways: some of them, however, recovering out of the panic that had seized them, followed the band at a distance to see what the issue would be. Of this number was Peter, and another disciple, whom John has mentioned, without giving his name, and who therefore is supposed to have been John himself. This disciple being acquainted at the high

priest's, got admittance for himself first, and soon after for Peter, who had come with him. "And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. That disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were sat down together, Peter sat down among them." The maid servant, who kept the door, concluding Peter to be a disciple also, following after him to the fire, and looking earnestly at him, charged him with the supposed crime. "Then saith the damsel that kept the door, unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?" This blunt attack threw Peter into such confusion, that he flatly denied his having any connexion with Jesus, replying, "I am not;" and adding, "I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest." As if he said, I do not understand any reason for your asking me such a question.

Thus the very apostle who had before acknowledged his Master to be the Messiah, the Son of the living God, and had so confidently boasted of his fortitude, and firm attachment to him in the greatest dangers, proved himself an arrant deserter of his cause upon trial. His shameful fears were altogether inexcusable, as the enemy who attacked him was one of the weaker sex, and the terror of the charge was in a great measure taken off, by the insinuation made in it that John was likewise known to be Christ's disciple: for as he was known at the high priest's, he was consequently known in that character. "Art thou not also one of this man's disciples?" Art thou not one of them, as well as he who is sitting with you? Nothing can account for this conduct of Peter, but the confusion and panic which had seized him on this occasion. As his inward perturbation must have appeared in his countenance and gesture, he did not choose to stay long with the servants at the fire. He went out, therefore, into the porch, where he was a little concealed. "And he went into the porch: after he had been some time there, another maid saw him, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them; and he again denied it, with an oath, I know not the man;" adding perjury to falsehood.

After Peter had been thus attacked without doors, he thought proper to return and mix with the crowd at the fire. "And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself." From this circumstance, it is clear, that the ensuing was the third denial; and that Peter left the porch where the second denial happened, and was come again into the hall. "Here one of the servants

of the high priest, (being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off,) saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again, and immediately the cock crew." The words of Malchus' kinsman, bringing to Peter's remembrance what he had done to that man, threw him into such a panic, that when those that stood by repeated the charge, he imprudently denied it: he even "began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak." For when they heard Peter deny the charge, they supported it by an argument drawn from the accent with which he pronounced his answer. "Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto:" so that being pressed on all sides, to give his lie the better color, he profaned the name of God, by imprecating the bitterest curses on himself, if he was telling a falsehood. Perhaps he hoped by these acts of impiety, to convince them effectually, that he was not the disciple of the holy Jesus.

Thus the apostle denied his Master three distinct times, with oaths and asseverations, totally forgetting the vehement protestations he had made, a few hours before, that he would never deny him. He was, probably, permitted to fall in this manner, to teach us two lessons; first, that the strongest resolutions formed in our own strength, cannot withstand the torrent of temptation; secondly, that the true disciples of Christ, though they fall, should be brought to a conviction of their sin; for he no sooner denied his Master the third time, than the cock crew, and first awakened in him the conviction of his sin. "And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter; and Peter remembered the words of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly." St. Luke is the Evangelist who particularly mentions this beautiful circumstance of Christ's turning and looking on Peter. The members of the council who sat on Jesus, were placed at the upper end of the hall; in the other were the servants, with Peter, at the fire: so that Jesus, being probably placed on some eminence, that his judges, who were numerous, might see and hear him, could easily look over towards Peter, and observe him denying him, and in passionate terms, loud enough to be heard, perhaps, over all the place.

The look pierced him, and with the crowing of the cock brought his Master's prediction fresh into his mind. He was stung with deep remorse, and being unable to contain himself, he covered his face with his garment, to conceal the confusion he was in, and going out into the porch, wept very bitterly. All this passed while the priests examined Jesus, with many taunts and revilings; and while the most zealous of Christ's disciples was denying him with oaths and imprecations, the peo-

ple insulted him in the most inhuman manner. Thus a complication of injuries, insults, and indignities, was at one time heaped upon the blessed Redeemer, the meek and mild Jesus, in order to fulfil the prophecies concerning him, and teach his followers a lesson of humility.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The Saviour of the world is arraigned at the bar of the Sanhedrim, and tried by the Jewish Council.

When the band of soldiers arrived at the high priest's with Jesus, they found there all the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders assembled. "And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people, and the chief priests, and the scribes, came together, and led him into their council. And the high priest asked Jesus of his disciples, and his doctrine." He inquired of him what his disciples were; for what end he had gathered them; whether it was to make himself a king, and what the doctrine was which he taught them? In these questions there was a great deal of art; for as the crime laid to our Saviour's charge was, that he had set up for the Messiah, and deluded the people, they expected he would claim that dignity in their presence, and so would, on his own confession, have condemned him, without any farther process. This was unfair, as it was artful and ensnaring. To oblige a prisoner on his trial to confess what might take away his life was a very unequitable method of proceeding; and Jesus expressed his opinion thereof with very good reason, and complained of it, bidding them prove what they had laid to his charge by witnesses. "Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world, I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me what I have said unto them; behold they know what I said." It was greatly to the honor of our blessed Redeemer, that all his actions were done in public, under the eye even of his enemies: because, had he been carrying on any imposture, the lovers of goodness and truth had thus abundant opportunities of detecting him; with propriety, he therefore, in his defence, appealed to that part of his character, but his answer was construed disrespectful; "for when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by, struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?"

To which he meekly replied, with the greatest serenity, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?" Show me, prove before this court, wherein my crime consists, or record it on the evidence on the face of my trial; which if you cannot, how can you answer this inhuman treatment to a defenceless prisoner, standing on his trial before the world, and in open court?

Thus Jesus became the example of his own precept, "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also," *Matt.* v. 39; bearing the greatest injuries with a patience that could not be provoked.

When the council found that Jesus declined answering the questions, whereby they expected to have drawn from him an acknowledgment of his being the Messiah, they proceeded to examine many witnesses to prove his having assumed that character: as they considered such a pretension as blasphemy in his mouth, who being only a man, according to their opinion, could not, without the highest affront to the divine majesty, pretend to the title of the Son of God, as it belonged only to the Messiah.

But in this examination they acted like interested and enraged persecutors, rather than impartial judges, forming their questions in the most artful manner, in order, if possible, to draw expressions from him, which they might pervert into suspicions of guilt, as some foundation for condemning Jesus, who had so long and faithfully labored for their salvation.

Their witnesses, however, disappointed them, some of them disagreeing in their story, and others mentioning things of no manner of importance. At last, two persons agreed in their depositions, namely, in hearing him say, that he was able to destroy the temple of God, and to raise it in three days. But this testimony was absolutely false; for our great Redeemer never said he could destroy and build the temple of Jerusalem in three days, as they affirmed. It is true, that after banishing the traders from the temple, when the Jews desired to know by what authority he undertook to make such a reformation, he referred them to the miracle of his resurrection: bidding them "destroy this temple (pointing probably to his body) and in three days he would raise it up." The witnesses, therefore, either through malice or ignorance, perverted his answer into an affirmation, that he was able to destroy and build the magnificent temple of Jerusalem in three days; and the judges considered this assertion as blasphemy, because it could only be done by the divine power.

Our Saviour made no reply to the evidences that were produced against him, which greatly provoked the high priest, who, supposing that he intended by his silence to put an affront

on the council, rose from his seat, and with great perturbation, demanded the reason for so remarkable a conduct. "Answerest thou nothing?" said he, "what is it which these witness against thee?" And some of the council added, "Art thou the Christ?" To which our blessed Saviour answered, If I should tell you plainly, you would not believe me: and if I should demonstrate it to you by the most evident and undeniable arguments, ye would neither be convinced, nor let me go.

The high priest, finding all his attempts to trepan our Saviour, in vain, said to him, I adjure you solemnly, by the dreadful and tremendous name of God, in whose presence you stand, that you tell me plainly and truly, whether thou art the Messiah, the Son of God.

The consequence attending a confession of the truth did not intimidate the blessed Jesus; for, being adjured by the chief magistrate, he immediately acknowledged the charge, adding, Ye shall shortly see a convincing evidence of this truth, in that wonderful and unparalleled destruction which I will send upon the Jewish nation; in the quick and powerful progress which the Gospel shall make upon the earth; and finally, in my glorious appearance in the clouds of heaven, at the last day, the sign you have so often demanded, in confirmation of my mission.

Upon our blessed Saviour's making this answer, a number of them cried out at once, "Art thou the Son of God?" To which our great Redeemer replied, "Ye say that I am:" a manner of speaking among the Jews, which expressed a plain and strong affirmation of the thing expressed.

When the high priest heard this second assertion, he rent his clothes with great indignation, and said unto the council, Why need we trouble ourselves to seek for any more witnesses? Ye yourselves, nay, this whole assembly, are witnesses, that he hath spoken manifest and notorious blasphemy: What think ye? To which they all replied, that for assuming to himself the character of the Messiah, he deserved to be put to death.

Then began the servants and the common people to fall upon him as a man already condemned: spitting upon him, buffeting him, and offering him all manner of rudeness and indignities.—They blindfolded him, and some of the council in order to ridicule him for having pretended to be the great prophet, bid him exercise his prophetical gift, in declaring who had smote him.

Such was the treatment of the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners, which, though derogatory to his character, he bore with patience and resignation, leaving his people an example to follow his steps, and submit to the will of God in all things, nor murmur at any of the dispensations of his providence.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Our blessed Saviour is carried before the Roman Governor.—The traitor Judas becomes his own executioner.—Pilate publicly acquits Jesus, and refers his case to the decision of Herod.

The blessed Jesus being thus condemned, by the unanimous voice of the grand assembly, it was resolved to carry him before the governor, that he likewise might pass sentence upon him. The Roman governor of Judea generally resided at Cæsarea; but at the great feasts they came up to Jerusalem, to prevent or suppress tumults, and to administer justice; it being a custom for the Roman governors of provinces to visit the principal towns under their jurisdiction, on this latter account. Pilate being accordingly come to Jerusalem, some time before the feast, had been informed of the great ferment among the rulers, and the true character of the person on whose account it was raised; for he entertained a just notion of it: "He knew that for envy they had delivered him." He knew the cause of their envy, was impressed with a favorable opinion of Jesus, and wished, if possible, to deliver him from his vile persecutors.

Early in the morning, the Jewish council brought Jesus to the hall of judgment, or governor's palace. They themselves, however, went not into the hall, but stood without, lest they should be defiled, and rendered incapable of eating the passover.

Now Judas Iscariot, who had delivered his Master into the hands of the council, finding his project turned out very different from what he expected, was filled with the deepest remorse for what he had done. He saw all his golden dreams of temporal honors and advantages, sunk at once to nothing; he saw his kind, his indulgent Master, condemned and forsaken by all his followers; he saw all this, and determined to make all the satisfaction in his power for the crime he had committed.

Accordingly, he came and confessed openly his sin, before the high priests and elders, offered them the money they had given him to commit it, and earnestly wished he could recall the fatal transaction of the preceding night.

It shows he thought this was the most public testimony he could possibly give of his Master's innocence, and his own repentance. I have, said he, committed a most horrid crime in betraying an innocent man to death.

But this moving speech of Judas had no effect on the callous hearts of the Jewish rulers. They affirmed, that, however he might think the prisoner innocent, and for that reason had sinned in bringing the sentence of death upon his head, they were not to blame: because they knew him a blasphemer who deserved to die. "What is that to us?" said they, "see thou to that." Nay, they even refused to take back the money they had given him as a reward for performing the base act of betraying his Master.

The deepest remorse now seized upon the wretched Judas, and his soul was agitated by the horrors of despair. The innocence and benevolence of his Master, the many favors he himself had received from him, and the many kind offices he had done for the sons and daughters of affliction, crowded at once into his mind, and rendered his torments intolerable. Racked with those agonizing passions, and unable to support the misery, he threw down the wages of his iniquity in the temple; and confessing at the same time his own sin, and the innocence of his Master, went away in despair, and hanged himself.

Thus perished Judas Iscariot the traitor, a miserable example of the fatal influence of covetousness, and a standing monument of divine vengeance to deter future generations from acting in opposition to the dictates of conscience, through a love of the things of this world: for which this wretched mortal betrayed his Master, his friend, his Saviour; and accumulated such a load of guilt on himself, as sunk his soul into the lowest pit of perdition.

The pieces of silver cast down by Judas, were gathered up, and delivered to the priests, who thinking it unlawful to put them into the treasury, because they were the wages of a traitor, agreed to lay them out in purchasing the potter's field, and to make it a common burial place for strangers.

This the Evangelist tells us was done, that a particular prophecy, relating to the Messiah might be fulfilled: "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me." This prophecy is found in Zechariah; but, by a mistake of some copyist, the word Jeremiah is inserted in the Greek manuscripts of St. Matthew's Gospel, unless we suppose with the learned Grotius, that this remarkable prophecy was first made by Jeremiah, and afterwards repeated by the immediate direction of the Spirit by Zechariah; and that, therefore, the Evangelist has only ascribed the prophecy to its original author. But, however this may be, the prophecy is remarkable, and was remarkably fulfilled. And the Evangelist, by thus appealing to a public transac-

tion, puts the truth of this part of the history beyond all manner of exception.

We have already observed, that the chief priests and elders refused to go themselves into the judgment-hall, lest they should contract some pollutions in the house of an heathen, which would have rendered them unfit for eating the passover. The same reason also hindered them from entering the governor's palace, on other festivals, when that magistrate attended in order to administer justice: a kind of structure was, therefore, erected, adjoining to the palace, which served instead of a tribunal or judgment seat. This structure, called in the Hebrew "Gabbatha," was finely paved with small pieces of marble of different colors, being always exposed to the weather. One side of this structure joined to the palace, and a door was made in the wall, through which the governor passed to this tribunal. By this contrivance, the people might stand round the tribunal in the open air, hear and see the governor when he spake to them from the pavement, and observe the whole administration of justice, without danger of being defiled, either by him or any of his retinue.

Before this tribunal the great Redeemer of mankind was brought, and the priests and elders having taken their places round the pavement, the governor ascended the judgment seat, and asked them what accusation they brought against the prisoner? Though nothing could be more natural than for the governor to ask this question, yet the Jews thought themselves highly affronted by it, and haughtily answered, If he had not been a very great and extraordinary malefactor, we should not have given you this trouble at all, much less at so unseasonable an hour.

Pilate then examined Jesus; and finding he had not been guilty either of rebellion or sedition, but that he was accused of particulars relating to the religion and custom of the Jews, grew angry, and said, What are these things to me? Take him yourselves, and judge him according to your own law. Plainly insinuating, that, in his opinion, the crime they laid to the prisoner's charge was not of a capital nature: and that such punishments as they were permitted by Cæsar to inflict were adequate to any misdemeanor that Jesus was charged with. But this proposal of the Roman governor was absolutely refused by the Jewish priests and elders, because it condemned the whole proceeding; and therefore they answered, We have no power to put any one to death, as this man certainly deserves, who has attempted not only to make innovations in our religion, but also set up himself for a king.

The eagerness of the Jews to get Jesus condemned by the Roman governor, who often sentenced malefactors to be cru-

cified, tended to fulfil the saying of our great Redeemer, who, during the course of his ministry, had often mentioned what kind of death he was, by the counsel of Omnipotence, appointed to die.

Pilate finding it impossible to prevent a tumult, unless he proceeded to try Jesus, ascended again the judgment seat, and commanded his accusers to produce their accusations against him. Accordingly, they accused him of seditious practices, affirming that he used every method in his power to dissuade the people from paying taxes to Cæsar, pretending that he himself was the Messiah, the great king of the Jews, so long expected. But they brought no proofs of these assertions. They only insinuated, that they had already convicted him of this assertion; which was absolutely false. Pilate, however, asked him, Is it true what these men lay to your charge, that you have indeed attempted to set up yourself as a king of the Jews? To which Jesus replied, Have your ever, during your stay in this province, heard any thing of me that gave you reason to suspect me guilty of secret practices and seditious designs against the government? Or do you found your question only on the present clamor and tumult that is raised against me? If this be the case, be very careful lest you be imposed on merely by the ambiguity of a word: for to be "King of the Jews," is not to erect a temporal throne, in opposiiton to that of Cæsar, but a thing of a very different nature; the kingdom of the Messiah is in the heavenly Canaan.

To which Pilate replied, Am I a Jew? Can I tell what your expectations are, and in what sense you understand these words? The rulers and chiefs of your own people, who are the most proper judges of these particulars, have brought you before me as a riotous and seditious person; if this be not the truth, let me know what is, and the crime thou hast been guilty of.

Jesus answered, I have a kingdom, and this kingdom I have professed to establish. But then it is not of this world, nor have my endeavors to establish it any tendency to cause disturbances in the government. For, had that been the case, my servants would have fought for me, and not suffered me to have fallen into the hands of the Jews. But I tell you plainly, my kingdom is wholly spiritual. I reign in the hearts of my people, and subdue their wills and affections into a conformity to the will of God.

You acknowledge then, in general, answered Pilate, that you have pretended to be a king? To which the blessed Jesus replied, In the sense I have told you, I have declared, and do now declare myself to be a king. For this very end I was born, and for this purpose I came into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth; and whosever sincerely loves, and

is always ready to embrace the truth, will have my testimony, and be convinced by it.

Pilate answered, "What is truth?" And immediately went out to the Jews, and said unto them, I have again examined this man, but cannot find him guilty of any fault, which, according to the Roman law, is worthy of death.

This generous declaration made by the governor, of the innocence of our blessed Saviour, had no effect on the superstitious and bigoted Jews. They even persisted in their accusations with more vehemence than before, affirming that he had attempted to raise a sedition in Galilee: "He stirreth up," said they, "the people, beginning from Galilee to this place."

Jesus, however, made no answer at all to this heavy charge. Nay, he continued silent, notwithstanding the governor himself expressly required him to speak in his own defence. A conduct so extraordinary, in such circumstances, astonished Pilate exceedingly; for he had great reason to be persuaded of the innocence of our dear Redeemer. The truth is, he was altogether ignorant of the divine counsel, by which the whole affair was directed.

There were many reasons which induced the blessed Jesus not to make a public defence. He came into the world purely to redeem lost and undone mankind, by offering up himself a sacrifice to appease the wrath of his Almighty Father; but had he pleaded with his usual force, the people had, in all probability, been induced to ask his release, and consequently his death had been prevented. Besides, the gross falsehood of the accusation, known to all the inhabitants of Galilee, rendered any reply absolutely needless.

In the mean time the chief priests continued to accuse him with great noise and tumult. And the meek and humble Jesus still continuing mute, Pilate spake again to him, saying, Wilt thou continue to make no defence? Dost thou not hear how vehemently these men accuse thee?

But Pilate recollecting what the chief priests had said with regard to a sedition in Galilee, asked if Jesus came out of that country? and on being informed he did, he immediately ordered him to be carried to Herod, who was also then at Jerusalem.

The governor supposed that Herod, in whose dominions the sedition was said to have been raised, must be a better judge of the affair than himself. Besides, his being a Jew rendered him more versed in the religion of his own country, and gave him greater influence over the chief priests and elders; he therefore considered him as the most proper person to prevail on the Jewish council to desist from their cruel prosecution. But

if, contrary to all human probability, he should at their solicitation, condemn Jesus, Pilate hoped to escape the guilt and infamy of putting an innocent person to death. He might also propose by this action to regain Herod's friendship, which he had formerly lost, by encroaching, in all probability, on his privileges.

But however that be, or whatever motive induced Pilate to send our great Redeemer to Herod, the latter greatly rejoiced at this opportunity of seeing Jesus, hoping to have the pleasure of beholding him perform some great miracle.

In this he was, however, mistaken; for as Herod had apostatized from the doctrine of John the Baptist, to which he was once a convert, and had even put his teacher to death, the blessed Jesus, however liberal in his miracles to the sons and daughters of affliction, would not work them to gratify the curiosity of a tyrant, nor even answer one of the many questions he proposed to him.

Herod, finding himself thus disappointed, ordered our blessed Saviour to be clothed with an old robe, resembling in color those worn by kings, and permitted his attendants to insult him.

From Herod's dressing him in this manner it evidently appears, that the chief priests and elders had accused him of nothing, but his having assumed the character of the Messiah: for the affront put on him was plainly in derision of that profession.

The other head of accusation, namely, his having attempted to raise a sedition in Galilee, on account of tribute paid to Cæsar, they did not dare to mention, as Herod could not fail of knowing it to be a gross and malicious falsehood. And no crime worthy of death being laid to his charge, Herod sent him again to Pilate. It seems, that though he was displeased with the great Redeemer of mankind for refusing to work a miracle before him, yet he did not think proper to comply with the wishes of his enemies.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The Roman Governor, for want of evidence, proposes to acquit and release Jesus, three several times, but at length, at the pressing instigation of the inveterate Jews, he condemns and delivers him up.

THE Roman governor, in order to acquire popular applause, used generally, at the feast of the passover, to release a prisoner nominated by the people. At this feast there was one in prison, named Barabbas, who, at the head of a number of rebels, had made an insurrection in the city, and committed murder during the confusion.

The multitude, being now again assembled before the governor's palace, began to call aloud on him to perform the annual office of mercy, customary at that festival.

Pilate, glad of this opportunity, told them, that he was very willing to grant the favor they desired; and asked them whether they would have Barabbas or Jesus released unto them. But without waiting for an answer, he offered to release Jesus, knowing that the chief priests had delivered him through envy; especially as Herod had not found him guilty of the crimes laid to his charge.

While these particulars were transacting, Pilate received a message from his wife, then with him at Jerusalem, and who had that morning been informed of something in a dream which gave her great uneasiness. The dream had so great an effect on this Roman lady, that she could not rest till she had sent an account of it to her husband, who was then sitting with the tribunal on the pavement, and begged him to have no hand in the death of the righteous person he was then judging.

The people had not yet determined whether they would have Jesus or Barabbas released unto them; therefore when Pilate received the message from his wife, he called the chief priests and rulers together, and, in the hearing of the multitude, made a speech to them, in which he gave them an account of the examination which Jesus had undergone both at his own and Herod's tribunal, declaring, that in both courts it had turned out honorably to his character; for which reason he proposed to them, that he should be the object of the people's favor.

Pilate did the priests the honor of desiring to know their inclinations in particular, perhaps with a design to soften their stony hearts, and, if possible, to move them for once to pity an unhappy and innocent man. But he was persuaded that if pity was absolutely banished from their callous breasts, his proposal

would have been acceptable to the people, who he expected would embrace the first opportunity of declaring in his favor. Yet in this he was disappointed. They cried out, all at once, "Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas."

Apostate mortals! a few hours ago ye listened with rapture to his heavenly discourses, beheld with transport the many salutary miracles wrought by this benevolent Son of the Most High, and earnestly importuned him to take possession of the throne and sceptre of David! Now nothing will satiate your infernal malice, but his precious blood! But remember, ye miscreants, ye monsters in human form, that this same Jesus, whom ye beheld with such contempt before the tribunal of the Roman governor; this Jesus, whose blood your infernal mouths so loudly requested, shall one day come in the clouds of heaven to take vengeance on his enemies! and how will ye be able to bear the sight of his appearance, when the very heavens themselves will melt at his presence, "the sun become black as sackcloth of hair," the moon be turned into blood, and the stars fly from their spheres? How will ye then repent of your unjust demand, and call to the mountains and rocks to fall on you, and hide you from the presence of that immaculate Lamb of God, the tremendous judge of the whole earth!

Pilate himself was astonished at this determination of the multitude, and repeated his question; for he could hardly believe what he had himself heard. But on their again declaring that they desired Barabbas might be released, he asked them what he should do with Jesus, which is called Christ. As if he had said, you demand that Barabbas should be released, and what shall I do with Jesus; you cannot surely desire me to crucify him, whom so many of you have acknowledged as your Messiah? "But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Then Pilate saith unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, crucify him."

They were so resolutely determined to have him destroyed, that notwithstanding the governor urged them again and again to desire his release, declared his innocence, and offered several times to dismiss him, they would not hear it, uttering their rage, sometimes in hollow, distant, inarticulate murmurs, and sometimes in furious outcries: to such a pitch were their passions raised by the craft and artful insinuations of their priests.

Pilate, finding it therefore in vain to struggle with their prejudices, called for water, and washed his hands before the multitude, crying out, at the same time, that the prisoner had no fault, and that he himself was innocent of his blood.

By this action and declaration, Pilate seems to have intended to make an impression on the Jewish populace, by complying with the institution of Moses, which orders, in case of an

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"Then released he Barrabbas unto them; and when he had scourged Jesus he delivered him to be crucified."—MATT. XXVII. 26.

unknown murder, the elders of the nearest city to wash their hands publicly, and say, "Our hands have not shed this blood." And in allusion to this law the Psalmist says, "I will wash mine hands in innocence." Accordingly, therefore, to the Jewish rite, Pilate made the most solemn and public declaration of the innocence of our dear Redeemer, and of his resolution of having no hand in his death.

But notwithstanding the solemnity of this declaration, the Jews continued inflexible, and cried out, with one voice, "His blood be on us and our children." Dreadful imprecation! It shocks humanity! An imprecation which brought on them the dreadful vengeance of Omnipotence, and is still a heavy burden on that perfidious people!

The governor, finding it impossible to alter their choice, released unto them Barabbas. And as it was the general practice of the Romans to scourge those criminals they condemned to be crucified, Pilate ordered the blessed Jesus to be scourged, before he delivered him to the soldiers to be put to death.

The soldiers having scourged Jesus, and received orders to crucify him, carried him into the Prætorium, or common hall, where they added the shame of disgrace to the bitterness of his punishment; for, sore as he was, by reason of the stripes they had given him, they dressed him in a purple robe, in derision of his being King of the Jews. Having dressed him in this robe of mock-majesty, they put a reed in his hand, instead of a sceptre, and after plaiting a wreath of thorns, they put it on his head for a crown; forcing it down in so rude a manner, that his temples were torn, and his face besmeared with his most precious blood. To the Son of God, in this condition, the rude soldiers bowed the knee, pretending to do it out of respect; but at the same time gave him severe blows on his head, which drove the prickles of the wreath afresh into his temples, and then spit on him, to express their highest contempt.

The governor, whose office obliged him to be present at this shocking scene of inhumanity, was ready to burst with grief. The sight of an innocent and virtuous man treated with such shocking barbarity, raised in his breast the most painful sensations of pity. And though he had given sentence that it should be as the Jews desired, and had delivered our dear Redeemer to the soldiers to be crucified, he was in hopes that if he showed him to the people in that condition, they must relent, and petition him to release him.

Filled with this thought, he resolved to carry him out, and exhibit to their view a spectacle capable of softening the most envenomed, obdurate, enraged enemy. And in order to render the impression still more poignant, he went out himself, and said unto them, Though I have sentenced this man to die, and have

scourged him as one that is to be crucified, yet I once more bring him before you, that I may again testify how fully I am persuaded of his innocence, and that ye may yet have an opportunity of saving his life.

As soon as the governor had finished his speech, Jesus appeared on the pavement, his hair, his face, his shoulders all clotted with blood, and the purple robe bedaubed with spittle. And that the sight of Jesus in this distress might make the greater impression on the people, Pilate, while he was coming forward, cried out, "Behold the man!" As if he had said, Will nothing make you relent? Have ye lost all feelings of humanity, and bowels of compassion? Can you bear to see the innocent, a son of Abraham, thus injured?

But all this was to no purpose; the priests, whose rage and malice had extinguished not only the sentiments of justice and feelings of pity natural to the human heart, but also that love which countrymen bear for each other, no sooner saw Jesus, than they began to fear the fickle populace might relent, and, therefore, laying decency aside, they led the way to the multitude, crying out, with all their might, Crucify him! crucify him!

Pilate, vexed to see the Jewish rulers thus obstinately bent on the destruction of a person from whom they had nothing to fear that was dangerous, either with regard to their church or state, passionately told them, that if they would have him crucified, they must do it themselves: because he would not suffer his people to murder a man who was guilty of no crime.

But this they also refused, thinking it dishonorable to receive permission to punish a person who had been more than once publicly declared innocent by his judge. Besides, they considered with themselves, that the governor might afterwards have called it sedition, as the permission had been extorted from him. Accordingly, they told him that even though none of the things alleged against the prisoner were true, he had committed such a crime in the presence of the council itself, as by their law deserved the most ignominious death. He had spoken blasphemy, calling himself the Son of God, a title which no mortal could assume, without the highest degree of guilt. "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God."

When Pilate heard that Jesus called himself the Son of God, his fear was increased. Knowing the obstinacy of the Jews in all matters of religion, he was afraid they would make a tumult in earnest; or perhaps he was himself more afraid than ever to take away his life, because he suspected it might be true. He doubtless remembered the miracles said to have been performed by Jesus, and therefore suspected that he really was the Son of

God. For it was well known that the religion which the governor professed, directed him to acknowledge the existence of demigods and heroes, or men descended from the gods. Nay, the heathens believed that their gods themselves appeared upon earth in the form of men.

Reflections of this kind induced Pilate to go again to the judgment-hall, and ask Jesus from what father he sprung, and from what country he came? But our blessed Saviour gave him no answer, lest the governor should reverse his sentence, and absolutely refuse to crucify him.

Pilate marvelled greatly at his silence, and said unto Jesus, Why dost thou refuse to answer me? You cannot be ignorant that I am invested with absolute power, either to release or crucify you. To which Jesus answered, I well know that you are Cæsar's servant, and accountable to him for your conduct. I forgive you any injury, which, contrary to your inclination, the popular fury constrains you to do unto me. Thou hast thy power *from above*, from the Emperor; for which cause the Jewish high priest, who hath put me into thy hands, and by pretending that I am Cæsar's enemy, forces thee to condemn me; or, if thou refusest, will accuse thee as negligent of the emperor's interest; he is more guilty than thou. "He that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin."

This sweet and modest answer made such an impression on Pilate, that he went out to the people, and declared his intention of releasing Jesus, whether they gave their consent or not. Upon which the chief priests and rulers of Israel cried out, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar." If thou releasest the prisoner, who hath set himself up for a king, and endeavored to raise a rebellion in the country, thou art unfaithful to the interest of the emperor thy master.

This argument was weighty, and shook Pilate's resolution to the very basis. He was terrified at the thought of being accused to the emperor, who, in all affairs of government always suspected the worst, and punished the most minute crimes relative thereto, with death.

The governor being thus constrained to yield, contrary to his inclination, was very angry with the priests for stirring up the people to such a pitch of madness, and determined to affront them.

He therefore brought Jesus out, a second time, into the pavement, wearing the purple robe and the crown of thorns; and pointing to him, said, "Behold your king!" ridiculing their national expectation of a Messiah.

This sarcastical expression stung them to the quick, and they cried out, "Away with him! away with him! crucify him!" To which Pilate answered, with the same mocking air, "Shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar." Thus did they publicly renounce their hope of the Messiah, which the whole economy of their religion had been calculated to cherish; they also publicly acknowledged their subjection to the Romans, and, consequently, condemned themselves, when they afterwards rebelled against the emperor.

We cannot help observing here, that the great unwillingness of the governor to pass sentence of death upon Jesus, has something in it very remarkable. For, from the character of Pilate, as drawn by the Roman historians themselves, he seems to have been far from possessing any true principle of virtue. To what then could it be owing, that so wicked a man should so steadily adhere to the cause of innocence, which he defended with uncommon resolution, and perhaps would never have abandoned it, had he not been forced by the threatenings of the chief priests and rulers of Israel; and when he did yield, and passed sentence of death upon our dear Redeemer, why did he still declare him innocent? This can certainly be attributed to no other cause than to the secret but powerful direction of the providence of the Almighty, who intended that, at the same time his son was condemned and executed as a malefactor, his innocence should be made to appear in the most public manner, and by the most authentic evidence, even that of the judge himself. From the circumstances we have been relating we may learn, that though the Almighty, in the course of his providential government of the world, and for purposes beyond the comprehension of finite mortals, suffers the most virtuous characters to be exposed, not only to the insults but the cruelty of the most abandoned of mankind; yet he will certainly vindicate the cause of innocence, and strike the guilty with horror and remorse, for their impious conduct.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The innocent immaculate Redeemer is led forth to Mount Calvary, and there ignominiously crucified between two notorious Malefactors.—Reviled by the spectators.—A phenomenon appears on the important occasion.—Our Lord addresses his friends from the Cross, and gives up the ghost.

THE solemn, the awful period now approached, when the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world, was to undergo the oppressive burden of our sins, upon the tree, and submit unto death, even the death of the cross, that we might live at the right hand of God, for ever and ever.

Sentence being pronounced against the blessed Jesus, the soldiers were ordered to prepare for his execution, a command which they readily obeyed; and after clothing him in his own garments, led him away to crucify him. It is not said that they took the crown of thorns from his temples; probably he died wearing it that the title placed over his head might be the better understood.

It is not to be expected that the ministers of Jewish malice remitted any of the circumstances of affliction, which were ever laid on persons condemned to be crucified. Accordingly Jesus was obliged to walk on foot to the place of execution, bearing his cross. But the fatigue of the preceding night, spent without sleep, the sufferings he had undergone in the garden, his having been hurried from place to place, and obliged to stand the whole time of his trials; the want of food, and the loss of blood he had sustained, and not his want of courage on this occasion, made him faint under the burden of his cross. The soldiers seeing him unable to bear the weight, laid it on one Simon, a native of Cyrene, in Egypt, the father of Alexander and Rufus, well known among the first Christians, and forced him to bear it after the great Redeemer of mankind. The soldiers did not, however, do this out of compassion to the sufferings of Jesus, but to prevent his dying with the fatigue, and by that means eluding his punishment.

The blessed Jesus, in his journey to Calvary, was followed by an immumerable multitude of people, particularly of women, who lamented bitterly the severity of his sentence, and showed all the tokens of sincere compassion and grief. Jesus, who always felt the woes of others more than he did his own, forgetting his distress at the very time when it lay heaviest upon him, turned himself about, and with a benevolence and tenderness truly divine, said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not

for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold, the days are coming in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" *Luke*, xxiii. 28, &c. As if he had said, Dry up these tears, ye daughters of Jerusalem, which ye shed in compassion to me, and reserve them for the deplorable fate of yourselves, and of your children; for the calamities that will soon fall on you and your offspring are truly terrible, and call for the bitterest lamentations. In those days of vengeance you will passionately wish that you had not given birth to a generation whose wickedness has rendered them the objects of the wrath of the Almighty, to such a degree as never was before experienced in the world. Then shall they wish to be crushed under the weight of enormous mountains, and concealed from their enemies in the bowels of the hills. The thoughts of these calamities afflict my soul far more than the feeling of my own sufferings. For if the Romans are permitted to inflict such punishments on me, who am innocent, how dreadful must the vengeance be which they shall inflict on a nation whose sins cry aloud to heaven, hastening the pace of the divine judgments, and rendering the perpetrators as proper for punishment as dry wood is for the flames.

Being arrived at the place of execution, which was called Golgotha, or the Place of Skulls, from the criminals' bones which lay scattered there, some of our Redeemer's friends offered him a stupefying potion, to render him insensible to the ignominy and excruciating pain of this punishment. But as soon as he tasted the potion, he refused to drink it, being determined to bear his sufferings, however sharp, not by intoxicating and stupefying himself, but by the strength of patience, fortitude, and faith.

Jesus having refused the potion, the soldiers began to execute their orders, by stripping him quite naked, and in that condition began to fasten him to his cross. But while they were piercing his hands and his feet with nails, instead of crying out through the sharpness of the pain, he calmly, though fervently prayed for them, and for all those who had any hand in his death; beseeching the Almighty to forgive them, and excusing them himself by the only circumstance that could alleviate their guilt; I mean, their ignorance. "Father," said the compassionate Redeemer of mankind, "forgive them, for they know not what they do." This was infinite meekness and goodness, truly worthy of the only begotten Son of God, an example of forgiveness, which, though it can never be equalled by any, should be imitated by all.

But behold the appointed soldiers dig the hole in which the cross was to be erected! The cross is placed in the ground, and the blessed Jesus lies on the bed of sorrows—they nail him to it—His nerves crack—His blood distils—He hangs upon his wounds naked, a spectacle to heaven and earth!

Thus was the only begotten Son of God, who came down from heaven to save the world, crucified by his own creatures; and, to render the ignominy still greater, placed between two thieves. "Hear, O heavens! O earth, earth, earth, hear! The Lord hath nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against him."

It was usual for the crimes committed by malefactors to be written on a white board, with black, and placed over their heads on the cross. In conformity to this custom, Pilate wrote a title in the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin languages, that all foreigners, as well as natives, might be able to read it, and fastened it to the cross, over the head of Jesus; and the inscription was, "This is the King of the Jews." But when the chief priests and the elders had read this title, they were greatly displeased; because, as it represented the crime for which Jesus was condemned, it insinuated that he had been acknowledged for the Messiah. Besides, being placed over the head of one who was dying by the most infamous punishment, it implied that all who attempted to deliver the Jews should perish in the same manner. The faith and hope of the nation, therefore, being thus publicly ridiculed, it is no wonder that the priests thought themselves highly affronted: and accordingly came to Pilate, begging that the writing might be altered. But as he had intended the affront in revenge for their forcing him to crucify Jesus, contrary both to his judgment and inclination, he refused to grant their request. "What I have written," said he, "I have written."

When the soldiers had nailed the blessed Jesus to the cross, and erected it, they divided his garments among them. But his coat, or vesture, being without seam, woven from the top throughout, they agreed not to rend it, but to cast lots for it, by which the prediction of the prophet concerning the death and sufferings of the Messiah was fulfilled. "They parted my garments among them, and for my vesture did they cast lots." A sufficient indication that every circumstance of the death and passion of the blessed Jesus was long before determined in the court of heaven; and accordingly his being crucified between two malefactors was expressly foretold, "and he was numbered with the transgressors."

The common people, whom the vile priests had incensed against the blessed Jesus, by the malicious falsehoods they had spread concerning him, and which they pretended to found on

the deposition of witnesses; the common people, I say, seeing him hang in so infamous a manner upon the cross, and reading the inscription that was placed over his head, expressed their indignation at him by sarcastical expressions. "Ah thou," said they, "that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross."

But the common people were not the only persons who mocked and derided the blessed Jesus, while he was suffering to obtain the remission of sins for all mankind. The rulers, who now imagined they had effectually destroyed his pretensions to the character of the Messiah, joined the populace in ridiculing him, and with a meanness of soul which many infamous wretches would have scorned, mocked him, even while he was struggling with the agonies of death. They scoffed at the miracles by which he demonstrated himself to be the Messiah, and promised to believe on him, on condition of his proving his pretensions, by descending from the cross. "He saved others," said they, "himself he cannot save; if he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe on him."

In the mean time, nothing could be more false and hypocritical than this pretension of the stiff-necked Jews; for they afterwards continued in their unbelief, notwithstanding they well knew that he raised himself from the dead: a much greater miracle than his coming down from the cross would have been; a miracle attested by witnesses whose veracity they could not call in question. It was told them by the soldiers whom they themselves placed at the sepulchre, to watch the body, and whom they were obliged to bribe largely, to conceal the truth. It is, therefore, abundantly evident that if the blessed Jesus had descended from the cross, the Jewish priests would have continued in their infidelity; and, consequently, that their declaration was made with no other intention, than to insult the Redeemer of mankind, thinking it impossible for him now to escape out of their hands.

The soldiers also joined in this general scene of mockery; "If thou be the king of the Jews," said they, "save thyself." If thou art the great Messiah expected by the Jews, descend from the cross by miracle, and deliver thyself from these excruciating torments.

Nor could even one of the thieves forbear mocking the great Lord of heaven and earth, though laboring himself under the most racking pains, and struggling with the agonies of death. But the other exercised a most extraordinary faith, at a time when our great Redeemer was in the highest affliction, mocked by men, and hanged upon the cross, as the most ignominious of malefactors. This Jewish criminal seems to have entertained

a more rational and exalted notion of the Messiah's kingdom than even the disciples themselves. They expected nothing but a secular empire; he gave strong intimations of his having an idea of Christ's spiritual dominion: for at the very time when Jesus was dying on the cross, he begged to be remembered by him when he came into his kingdom. "Lord," said he, "remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Nor did he make this request in vain: the great Redeemer of mankind answered him, "Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

But let us attentively consider the history of our blessed Saviour's passion as it offers to our view events absolutely astonishing. For when we remember the perfect innocence of our great Redeemer, the uncommon love he bore to the children of men, and the many kind and benevolent offices he did for the sons and daughters of affliction; when we reflect on the esteem in which he was held all along by the common people, how cheerfully they followed him to the remotest corners of the country, nay, even in the desolate retreats of the wilderness, and with what pleasure they listened to his discourses: when we consider these particulars, I say, we cannot help being astonished to find them at the conclusion rushing all of a sudden into the opposite extreme, and every individual, as it were, combined to treat him with the most barbarous cruelty.

When Pilate asked the people if they desired to have Jesus released, his disciples, though they were very numerous, and might have made a great appearance in his behalf, remained absolutely silent, as if they had been speechless or infatuated. The Roman soldiers, notwithstanding their general had declared him innocent, insulted him in the most inhuman manner. The scribes and pharisees ridiculed him. The common people, who had received him with hosannas, a few days before, mocked him as they passed by, and railed at him as a deceiver. Nay, the very thief on the cross reviled him.

This sudden revolution in the humor of the whole nation, may seem unaccountable. But if we could assign a proper reason for the silence of the disciples, the principles which influenced the rest might be discovered in their several speeches. The followers of the blessed Jesus had attached themselves to him in expectation of being raised to great wealth and power in his kingdom, which they expected would have been established long before this time. But seeing no appearance at all of what they had so long hoped for, they permitted him to be condemned, perhaps because they thought it would have obliged him to break the Roman yoke by miracle.

With respect to the soldiers, they were angry that any one should pretend to royalty in Judea, where Cæsar had estab-

lished his authority. Hence they insulted our blessed Saviour with the title of king, and paid him in mockery, the honors of a sovereign.

As for the common people, they seem to have lost their opinion of him, probably because he had neither convinced the council, nor rescued himself, when they condemned him. They began therefore to consider the assertion of his destroying the temple, and building it in three days, as a kind of blasphemy, because it required a divine power to execute such an undertaking.

The priests and scribes were filled with the most implacable and diabolical malice against him; because he had torn off their mask of hypocrisy, and showed them to the people in their true colors. It is, therefore, no wonder that they ridiculed his miracles, from whence he derived his reputation.

In short, the thief also fancied that he might have delivered both himself and them, if he had been the Messiah; but as no such deliverance appeared, he upbraided him for making pretensions to that high character.

But now, my soul, take one view of thy dying Saviour, breathing out his soul upon the cross! Behold his unspotted flesh lacerated with stripes, by which thou art healed! See his hands extended and nailed to the cross; those beneficent hands which were incessantly stretched out to unloose thy heavy burdens, and to impart blessings of every kind! Behold his feet riveted to the accursed tree with nails! those feet which always went about doing good, and travelled far and near to spread the glad tidings of everlasting salvation! View his tender temples encircled with a wreath of thorns which shoot their keen afflictive points into his blessed head; that head which was ever meditating peace to poor lost and undone sinners, and spent many a wakeful night in ardent prayer for their happiness! See him laboring in the agonies of death! breathing out his soul into the hands of his Almighty Father, and praying for his cruel enemies! Was ever love like this? Was ever benevolence so finely displayed?

O my soul, put thou thy trust in that bleeding, that dying Saviour! Then, though the pestilence walketh in darkness, and the sickness destroyeth at noon-day; though thousands fall beside thee, and ten thousands at thy right hand, thou needest not fear the approach of any evil! Either the destroying angel shall pass over thee, or dispense the corrections of a friend, not the scourges of an enemy, which instead of hurting, will work for thy good. Then, though profaneness and infidelity, far more malignant evils, breathe their contagion, and taint multitudes around thee, thou shalt be safely hid in the hollow of his hand, and freed from every danger.

Come, then, my soul, let us take sanctuary under that tree of life, the ignominious cross of thy bleeding Saviour; let us fly for safety to that city of refuge, opened in his bleeding wounds. These will prove a sacred hiding place, not to be pierced by the flames of divine wrath, or the fiery darts of temptation. His dying merits, his perfect obedience, will be "as rivers of water in a dry place, or as the shadow of a great rock in a dreary land."

But particularly in that last tremendous day, when the heavens shall be rent asunder, and be wrapped up like a scroll; when his Almighty arm shall arrest the sun in his career, and dash the structure of the universe to pieces; when the dead, both small and great, shall be gathered before the throne of his glory, and the fates of all mankind hang on the very point of a final irreversible decision; then, if thou hast faithfully trusted in him, and made his precepts thy constant directors, shalt thou be owned and defended by him. O! reader, may both thou that peruseth, and him who hath written this for thy soul's advantage, be covered at that unutterably important juncture, by the wings of his redeeming love; then shall we behold all the horrible convulsions of expiring nature with composure, with comfort! we shall even welcome the consummation of all things as the "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

But see the sun, that glorious luminary of heaven, as it were, hides its face from this detestable action of mortals, and is wrapped in the pitchy mantle of chaotic darkness! This preternatural eclipse of the sun continued for three hours, to the great terror and astonishment of the people present at the crucifixion of our dear Redeemer. And surely nothing could be more proper than this extraordinary alteration in the face of nature, while the Sun of righteousness was withdrawing his beams, not only from the promised land, but from the whole world; for it was at once a miraculous testimony given by the Almighty himself to the innocence of his Son and a proper emblem of the departure of him who was the light of the world, at least till his luminous rays, like the beams of the morning, shone out anew with additional splendor in the ministry of his apostles.

Nor was the darkness which now covered Judea and the neighboring countries, beginning about noon and continuing till Jesus expired, the effect of an ordinary eclipse of the sun. It is well known that this phenomenon can only happen at the change of the moon; whereas the Jewish passover, at which our great Redeemer suffered, was always celebrated at the full. Besides, the total darkness of an eclipse of the sun never exceeds twelve or fifteen minutes, whereas this continued three full hours. Nothing, therefore, but the immediate hand of that Almighty Being which placed the sun in the centre of the planet-

ary system could have produced this astonishing darkness. Nothing but Omnipotence, who first lighted this glorious luminary of heaven, could have deprived it of its cheering rays. Now, ye scoffers of Israel, whose blood ye have so earnestly desired, and wished it might fall upon you and your children, behold, all nature is dressed in the sable veil of sorrow, and, in a language that cannot be mistaken, mourns the departure of its Lord and Master; weeps for your crimes, and deprecates the vengeance of heaven upon your guilty heads! Happy for you that this suffering Jesus is compassion itself, and even in the agonies of death, prays to his heavenly Father to avert from you the stroke of his justice.

This preternatural eclipse of the sun was considered as a miracle by the heathens themselves; and one of them cried out, "Either the world is at an end, or the God of nature suffers." And well might he use the expression: for never since this planetary system was called from its primitive chaos, was known such a deprivation of light in the glorious luminary of day. Indeed, when the Almighty punished Pharaoh for refusing to let the children of Israel depart out of his land, the sable veil of darkness was for three days drawn over Egypt. But this darkness was confined to a part of that kingdom; whereas, this that happened at our Saviour's crucifixion was universal.

When the darkness began, the disciples naturally considered it as a prelude to the deliverance of their Master. For though the chief priests, elders and people, had sarcastically desired him to descend from the accursed tree, his friends could not but be persuaded that he who had delivered so many from incurable diseases; who had restored limbs to the maimed, and eyes to the blind; who had given speech to the dumb, and called the dead from the chambers of the dust, might easily save himself, even from the cross.

When, therefore, his mother, his mother's sister, Mary Magdalene, and the beloved disciple, observed the veil of darkness begin to extend over the face of nature, they drew near to the foot of the cross, probably in expectation that the Son of God was going to shake the frame of the universe, unloose himself from the cross, and take ample vengeance on his cruel and perfidious enemies.

The blessed Jesus was now in the midst of his sufferings. Yet when he saw his mother and her companions, their grief greatly affected his tender breast, especially the distress of his mother. The agonies of death, under which he was now laboring, could not prevent his expressing the most affectionate regard, both for her and for them. For that she might have some consolation to support her under the greatness of her sorrows, he told her the disciple whom he loved would, for the sake of that love, supply

his place to her after he was taken from them, even the place of a son; and, therefore, he desired her to consider him as such, and expect from him all the duties of a child. "Woman," said he, "behold thy son."

Nor was this remarkable token of filial affection towards his mother the only instance the dying Jesus gave of his sincere love to his friends and followers; the beloved disciple had also a token of his high esteem. He singled him out as the only person among his friends to supply his place with regard to his mother. Accordingly he desired him expressly to reverence her in the same manner as if she had been his own parent; a duty which the favorite disciple gladly undertook, carried her with him to his house, and maintained her from that hour to the day of her death; her husband Joseph, having, it seems, been dead some time.

Thus, in the midst of the heaviest sufferings that human nature ever sustained, the blessed Jesus demonstrated a divine strength of benevolence. Even at the time when his own distress was at the highest pitch, and nature was dressed in the robe of mourning for the sufferings of the Redeemer of mankind, his friends had so large a share of his concern, that their happiness interrupted the sharpness of his pains, and for a short time engrossed his thoughts.

But now the moment when he should resign his soul into the hands of his heavenly Father, approached, and he repeated part, at least, of the twenty-second Psalm, uttering, with a loud voice these remarkable words, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani?" that is, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Or, as the words may be rendered, "My God, my God, how long a time hast thou forsaken me?"

Some believe that our blessed Saviour repeated the whole Psalm: it having been the custom of the Jews, in making quotations, to mention only the first words of the Psalm or Section which they cited. If so, as this Psalm contains the most remarkable particulars of our dear Redeemer's passion, being, as it were, a summary of the prophecies relative to that subject, by repeating it on the cross, the blessed Jesus signified that he was now accomplishing the things that were predicted concerning the Messiah. And as this Psalm is composed in the form of a prayer, by pronouncing it at this time, he also claimed of his Father the performance of all the promises he had made, whether to him, or to his people.

Some of the people who stood by, when they heard our blessed Saviour pronounce the first words of the Psalm, misunderstood him, probably from their not hearing him distinctly, and concluded that he called for Elias. Upon which one of them filled a sponge with vinegar, put it on a reed, and gave

him to drink; being desirous to keep him alive as long as possible, to see whether Elias would come to take him down from the cross.

But as soon as Jesus had tasted the vinegar, he said, "It is finished." That is, the work of man's redemption is accomplished; the great work which the only begotten Son of God came into the world to perform, is finished.

In speaking these words he cried with an exceeding loud voice; and afterwards addressed his Almighty Father, in words which form the best pattern of a recommendatory prayer, at the hour of death, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." And having uttered these words, he bowed his head and yielded up the ghost.

But behold, at the very instant that the blessed Jesus resigned his soul into the hands of his heavenly Father, the veil of the temple was miraculously rent from the top to the bottom; probably in the presence of the priest, who burnt incense in the holy place, and who, doubtless, published the account when he came out: for our blessed Saviour expired at the ninth hour, the very time of offering the evening sacrifice.

Nor was this the only miracle that happened at the death of the great Messiah; the earth trembled from its very foundations, the flinty rocks burst asunder, and the sepulchres hewn in them were opened; and many bodies of saints deposited there awakened, after his resurrection, from the sleep of death, left the gloomy chambers of the tomb, went into the city of Jerusalem, and appeared unto many.

And as the rending the veil of the temple intimated that the entrance into the holy place, the type of heaven, was now laid open to all nations; so the resurrection of a number of saints from the dead demonstrated that the power of death, and the grave, was broken; the sting was taken from death, and the victory wrested from the grave. In short, our dear Redeemer's conquest over the enemies of mankind were shown to be complete; and an earnest was given of the general resurrection of the dead.

Nor did the remarkable particulars which attended that awful period, when Jesus gave up the ghost, affect the natives of Judea only. The Roman centurion, who was placed near the cross, to prevent disorders of any kind, glorified the Almighty, and cried out, "Truly this was the Son of God!" And others who were with them, when they beheld heaven itself bearing witness of the truth of our great Redeemer's mission, smote their breasts, and retired.

They had been incessant with loud voices to have him crucified; but when they saw the face of the creation wrapped in the

gloomy mantle of darkness, during his crucifixion, and found his death accompanied with an earthquake, as if nature had been in an agony when he died, they rightly interpreted these prodigies to be so many testimonies from the Almighty, of his innocence; and their passions, which had been inflamed and exasperated against him, became quite calm, or exerted in his behalf. Some were angry within themselves for neglecting the opportunity the governor gave them of saving his life. Some were stung with remorse for having been active in procuring Pilate to condemn him, and even offering the most bitter insults, while he labored under the most cruel sufferings. And others were deeply affected at beholding the pains he suffered, which were rigorously severe.

These various passions being visibly painted in their countenances, afforded a melancholy spectacle: many of the multitude returning from the cruel execution with their eyes fixed upon the earth, pensive and silent; their hearts ready to burst with grief, groaning deeply within themselves, shedding floods of tears, and smiting on their breasts.

The grief they now felt for the blessed Jesus was distinguished from their former rage against him by this remarkable particular, that their rage was entirely owing to the artful insinuations of the priests; whereas their grief was genuine, and the natural feelings of their own hearts, greatly affected with the truth and innocence of him who was the object of their commiseration. And as flattery had no share in this mourning, so the expressions of their sorrow were such as became a real and unfeigned passion.

Thus were demonstrated by many awful tokens, the truth, the divinity, the power of our Redeemer's mission: the blind, the obdurate Jews were struck with horror, fully convinced that the person they had cruelly put to death, was nothing less than the Son and Servant of God, the promised Messiah, the Saviour of the world.

CHAPTER XL.

The blessed Jesus treated with indignity after the Crucifixion.—A pious person begs his body of Pilate, in order for interment.

It was expressly forbidden by the law of Moses, that the bodies of those who were hanged should remain all night on the tree. In conformity to this law, and because the sabbath

was at hand, the Jews begged the governor that the legs of the three persons crucified might be broken, to hasten their death. To this request Pilate readily consented; and accordingly gave the necessary order to the soldiers to put it in execution.

But on perceiving that Jesus was already dead, the soldiers did not give themselves the trouble of breaking his legs, as they had done those of the two malefactors that were crucified with him. One of them, however, either out of wantonness or cruelty, thrust a spear into his side, and out of the wound flowed blood and water.

This wound, therefore, was of the greatest importance to mankind, as it abundantly demonstrated the truth of our Saviour's death, and consequently prevented all objections that the enemies to our holy faith would otherwise have raised against it. The Evangelist adds, that the legs of our great Redeemer were not broken, but his side pierced, that two particular prophecies might be fulfilled: "A bone of him shall not be broken;" and, "they shall look on him whom they have pierced."

Among the disciples of our blessed Jesus, was one called Joseph of Arimathea; a person equally remarkable for his birth, fortune, and office. This man, who was not to be intimidated by the malice of his countrymen, went boldly to Pilate, and begged the body of his great Master. He had, indeed, nothing to fear from the Roman governor, who, during the whole course of our Saviour's trial, had shown the greatest inclination to release him; but he had reason to apprehend that this action might draw upon him the malice of the rulers of the Jews, who had taken such great pains to get the Messiah crucified.

However, the great regard he had for the remains of his Master, made him despise the malice of the Jews; being persuaded that Omnipotence would defend him, and cover his enemies with shame and confusion. And he well knew, that if no friend procured a grant of the body, it would be ignominiously cast out among the executed malefactors.

Pilate was at first surprised at the request of Joseph, thinking it highly improbable that he should be dead in so short a time. He had, indeed, given orders for the soldiers to break the legs of the crucified persons; but he knew it was common for them to live many hours after that operation was performed; for though the pain they felt must be exquisite to the last degree, yet, as the vital parts remained untouched, life would continue some time in the miserable body.

The governor, therefore, called the centurion, to know the truth of what Joseph had told him; and being convinced, from the answer of that officer, that Jesus had been dead some time, he readily gave the body to Joseph.

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"But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs; But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water."—JOHN XIX. 33, 34.

This worthy counsellor having obtained his request, repaired to Mount Calvary; and, being assisted by Nicodemus, took the body down from the cross. The latter was formerly so cautious in visiting Jesus that he came to him by night But in paying the last duties to his Master, he used no art to conceal his design. He showed a courage far superior to that of any of his apostles, not only assisting Joseph in taking down the body of Jesus from the cross, but bringing with him a quantity of spices, necessary in the burial of his Saviour.

Accordingly they wrapped the body with the spices in fine linen, and laid it in a new sepulchre, which Joseph had hewn out of a rock for himself. This sepulchre was situated in a garden, near Mount Calvary: and, in which having carefully deposited the body of the blessed Jesus, they fastened the door, by rolling to it a very large stone. "And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed." *Matt.* xxvii. 59, 60.

Oh! what a wonderful spectacle was now exhibited in this memorable sepulchre! He who clothes himself with light, as with a garment, and walks upon the wings of the wind, was pleased to wear the habiliments of mortality, and dwell among the prostrate dead! Who can repeat the wondrous truth too often? Who can dwell upon the enchanting theme too long? He who sits enthroned in glory, and diffuses bliss among all the heavenly host, was once a pale and bloody corpse, and pressed the floor of this little sepulchre!

O death! how great was thy triumph in that hour! never did thy gloomy realms contain such a prisoner before—Prisoner did I say? No, he was more than Conqueror. He arose far more mighty than Samson from a transient slumber; broke down the gates and demolished the strong holds of those dark dominions. And this, O mortals! is your consolation and security. Jesus hath trod the dreadful path, and smoothed it for your passage. Jesus, sleeping in the chambers of the tomb, has brightened the dismal mansion, and left an inviting odour in those beds of dust. The dying Jesus is your sure protection, your unquestionable passport through the territories of the grave. Believe in him, and they shall prove a "highway to Sion;" shall transmit you safe to Paradise. Believe in him, and you shall be no losers, but unspeakable gainers by your dissolution. For hear what the oracle of heaven says on this important point: "Whoso believeth in me shall never die." Death shall no longer be inflicted as a punishment, but rather vouchsafed as a blessing. The exit is the end of their frailty,

and their entrance upon perfection: their last groan is the prelude to life and immortality.

But to return. The women of Galilee, who had watched their dear Redeemer in his last moments, and accompanied his body to the sepulchre, observing that the funeral rites were performed in a hurry, agreed among themselves, as soon as the Sabbath was passed, to return to the sepulchre, and embalm the body of their dead Saviour, by anointing and swathing him in the manner then common among the Jews. Accordingly they retired to the city, and purchased the spices necessary for that purpose; Nicodemus having furnished only a mixture of myrrh and aloes.

During these transactions, the chief priests and pharisees, remembering that Jesus had more than once predicted his own resurrection, came to the governor, and informed him of it, begging, at the same time, that a guard might be placed at the sepulchre, lest his disciples should carry away the body, and affirm that he was risen from the dead. This happened a little before it was dark in the evening, called "the next day that followed," by the Evangelist, because the Jewish day began at sunset.

This request being thought reasonable by Pilate, he gave them leave to take as many soldiers as they pleased, out of the cohort, which at the feast came from the castle of Antonia, and kept guard of the porticoes of the temple. For that they were not Jewish but Roman soldiers, whom the priests employed to watch the sepulchre, is evident from their asking them of the governor. Besides, when the soldiers returned with the news of our Saviour's resurrection, the priests desired them to report that his disciples had stolen him away while they slept: and to encourage them to tell the falsehodd boldly, promised that if their neglect of duty came to the governor's ears, proper methods should be used to pacify him, and deliver them from any punishment: a promise which there was no need of making to their own servants.

The priests having thus obtained a guard of Roman soldiers, men long accustomed to military duties, and therefore the most proper for watching the body, set out with them to the sepulchre; and to prevent these guards from combining with the disciples in carrying on any fraud, placed them at their post, and sealed the stone which was rolled to the door of the sepulchre.

Thus what was designed to expose the mission and doctrines of Jesus, as rank falsehood and vile imposture, proved in fact the strongest confirmation of the truth and divinity of the same, that could possibly be given; and placed what they wanted to refute (which was his resurrection from the dead) even beyond a doubt.

CHAPTER XLI.

Two pious Women go to view the Sepulchre of their crucified Lord and Saviour.—An awful phenomenon happens.—A ministering Spirit descends.—The Redeemer bursts the chains of death, and rises from the confines of the grave.

VERY early in the morning, after the Sabbath, Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary came to visit the sepulchre, in order to embalm our Lord's body; for the performance of which, they had, in concert with several other women from Galilee, brought ointments and spices. But before they reached the sepulchre, there was a great earthquake preceding the most memorable event that ever happened among the children of men, the resurrection of the Son of God from the dead. "For the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and sat upon it; his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men;" they fled into the city, and the Saviour of the world rose from the dead.

The angel, who had, till then, sat upon the stone, quitted his station, and entered into the sepulchre. In the mean time Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, were still on their way to the sepulchre, together with Salome, who joined them on the road. As they proceeded on their way, they consulted among themselves, with regard to the method of putting their design of embalming the body of their Master into execution; particularly with respect to the enormous stone which they had seen placed there, with the utmost difficulty, two days before. "Who," said they, "shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? For it was very great."—But in the midst of this deliberation about removing this great and sole obstacle to their design (for it does not appear they knew any thing of the guard) they lifted up their eyes, and perceived it was already rolled away.

Alarmed at so extraordinary and unexpected a circumstance, Mary Magdalene concluded, that the stone could not have been rolled away without some design; and that those who rolled it away could have no other intent than that of removing our Lord's body. Imagining, by appearances, that they had really done so, she ran immediately to acquaint Peter and John of what she had seen, and what she suspected; leaving Mary and Salome there, that if the other women should arrive during her absence, they might acquaint them with their surprise, at find-

ing the stone removed, and of Mary Magdalene's running to inform the apostles of it.

In the mean time, the soldiers, who were terrified at seeing an awful messenger from on high roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and open it in quality of a servant, fled into the city, and informed the rulers of these miraculous appearances. This account was highly mortifying to the chief priests, as it was a proof of our Saviour's resurrection that could not be denied: they, therefore, resolved to stifle it immediately: and accordingly bribed the soldiers to conceal the real fact, and to publish every where, that his disciples had stolen the body out of the sepulchre.

What! the body taken away while the sepulchre was guarded by Roman soldiers? Yes, the disciples stole the body while the soldiers slept! A story so inconsistent, and which so evidently carries the marks of its own confutation with it, that it deserves no answer.

The priests themselves could not be so stupid as not to foresee what constructions the world would put upon the account given by persons who pretended to know and tell what was done while they were asleep.

CHAPTER XLII.

The angel addresses the pious Women.—Two disciples go to the Sepulchre.—Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene.—Afterwards to a company of Women.—Peter meets his Lord and Master, after his Resurrection.

While Mary Magdalene was going to inform the disciples that the stone was rolled away from the mouth of the sepulchre, and the body taken away, Mary and Salome continued advancing towards the sepulchre, and at their arrival found, what they expected, the body of their beloved Master gone from the place where it had been deposited by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea; but at the same time beheld, to their great astonishment, a beautiful young man, in shining raiment, very glorious to behold, sitting on the right side of the sepulchre.

Matthew tells us that it was the angel who had rolled away the stone, and frightened away the guards from the sepulchre. It seems he had now laid aside the terrors in which he was then arrayed, and assumed the form and dress of a human being, in

order that these pious women, who had accompanied our Saviour during the greater part of the time of his public ministry, might be as little terrified as possible.

But notwithstanding his beauty and benign appearance, they were greatly affrighted, and on the point of turning back, when the heavenly messenger, to banish their fears, told them, in a gentle accent, that he knew their errand. "Fear not," said he, "for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified. He is nor here, for he is risen, as he said:" and then invited them to come down into the sepulchre, and view the place where the Son of God had lain: that is, to look on the linen clothes, and the napkin that had been about his head, and which he had left behind him when he arose from the dead: for to look at the place in any other view would not have tended to confirm their faith of his resurrection.

The women, greatly encouraged by the agreeable news, as well as by the peculiar accent with which this sweet messenger from the heavenly Canaan delivered his speech, went down into the sepulchre, when, behold, another of the angelic choir appeared.

They did not, however, yet seem to give sufficient credit to what was told them by the angel; and therefore the other gently chid them for seeking the living among the dead, with an intention to do him an office due only to the latter, and for not believing what was told them by a messenger from heaven, or rather for not remembering the words which their great Master himself had told them with regard to his own resurrection. "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."

When the women had satisfied their minds by looking at the place where the Lord had lain, and where nothing was to be found but the linen clothes, the angel who first appeared to them resumed the discourse, and bade them go and tell his disciples, particularly Peter, the glad tidings of his Master's resurrection from the dead; that he was going before them to Galilee; and that they should there have the pleasure of seeing him.

The reason why the disciples were ordered to go into Galilee to meet their great and beloved Master seems to be this: they were now most of them in Jerusalem, celebrating the passover; and it may be easily imagined that, on receiving the news of the Lord's resurrection, many, if not all, would resolve to tarry in Jerusalem, in expectation of meeting him there: a thing that must have proved of great detriment to them, at that time

of the year, when the harvest was about to begin, the sheaf of first fruits being always offered on the second day of the passover week.

In order, therefore, to prevent their staying so long from home, the message was sent directing them to return into Galilee, with full assurance that they should there have the pleasure of seeing their great Lord and Master; and by that means have all their doubts removed, and be fully convinced that he had patiently undergone all his sufferings for the sins of mankind.

The women, highly elated with the news of their Lord's resurrection, left the sepulchre immediately, and ran to carry the disciples the glad tidings.

During these transactions at the sepulchre, Peter and John, having been informed by Mary Magdalene, that the stone was rolled away, and the body of Jesus not to be found, were hastening to the grave, and missed the women who had seen the appearance of angels.

The disciples being astonished at what Mary Magdalene had told them, and desirous of having their doubts cleared up, made all the haste possible to the sepulchre; and John, being younger than Peter, arrived at the sepulchre first, but did not go in, contenting himself with stooping down, and seeing the linen clothes lying, which had been wrapped about our Saviour's body. Peter soon arrived, and went to the sepulchre, where he saw the "linen clothes lie: and the napkin that was about his head not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself."

Our Lord left the grave-clothes in the sepulchre, probably to show that his body was not stolen away by his disciples, who in such a case would not have taken time to have stripped it. Besides, the circumstances of the grave-clothes induced the disciples themselves to believe when the resurrection was related to them. But at that time they had not any suspicion that he was risen from the dead.

These two disciples having thus satisfied themselves that what Mary Magdalene had told them was really true, returned to their respective habitations; but Mary continued weeping at the door of the sepulchre. She had, it seems, followed Peter and John to the garden, but did not return with them, being anxious to find the body. Accordingly, stepping down into the sepulchre to examine it once more, she saw two angels sitting, the one at the head and the other at the feet where the body of Jesus had lain. They were now in the same position as when they appeared to the other women; but had rendered themselves invisible while Peter and John were at the sepulchre.

Mary, on beholding these heavenly messengers, dressed in robes of light, was greatly terrified. But they, in the most

endearing accent, asked her, "Woman, why weepest thou? To which she answered, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." On pronouncing these words, she turned herself about, and saw Jesus standing near her: but the terror she was in, and the garments in which he was now dressed, prevented her from knowing him for some time. Jesus repeated the same question used before by the angel, "Woman, why weepest thou?" To which Mary, who now supposed him to be the gardener, answered, Sir, if his body be troublesome in the sepulchre, and thou hast removed him, tell me where he is deposited, and I will take him away. But our blessed Saviour, willing to remove her anxiety, called her by her name with his usual tone of voice, on which she immediately knew him; and falling down before him, would have embraced his knees, according to that modesty and reverence with which the women of the East saluted the men, especially those who were their superiors in station.

But Jesus refused the compliment, telling her, that he was not going immediately into heaven. He was often to show himself to the disciples, before he ascended; so that she would have frequent opportunities of testifying her regard to him. And at the same time, said to her, "Go to the brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God."

Thus did the blessed Jesus contemplate, with a singular pleasure, the work of redemption he had just finished. The happy relation between God and man which had been long cancelled by sin, was now renewed. The Almighty, who had disowned them on account of their disobedience, was again reconciled to them; he was become their God and Father; they were exalted to the honorable relation of Christ's brethren, and the sons of God; and their Father loved them with an affection far exceeding that of the most tender hearted parent upon earth.—The kindness of this message sent by our dear Redeemer to his disciples, will appear above all praise, if we remember their late behaviour. They had every one of them forsaken him in the greatest extremity; when he was scourged and mocked by the Roman soldiers, derided by his countrymen, and spitefully entreated by all, they hid themselves in some place of safety, and preferred their own security to the deliverance of their master. When he fainted under the burden of his cross, none of them were there to assist him.

Simon, a Cyrenian, was compelled by the Roman soldiers to ease him of his ponderous burden. But notwithstanding they had refused to assist their Master during his sufferings for the sins of the world, he graciously, he freely forgave them; he as-

sured them of their pardon, and called them even by the endearing name of brethren.

There is something very remarkable in this part of the history. None of the apostles or male disciples were honored with the first appearance of the angels, or with the immediate news of the resurrection of the Son of God, much less with the appearance of Jesus himself.

The angels in the sepulchre kept themselves invisible all the time that Peter and John were observing the linen clothes, and satisfying themselves that the body of their Master was not there. Perhaps the male disciples in general were treated with this mark of disrespect, both because they had, with shameful cowardice, forsaken their Master when he was betrayed into the hands of his enemies, and because their faith was so weak that they had absolutely despaired of his being the Messiah, when they saw him expire on the cross. But how different was the conduct of the women! Laying aside the weakness and timidity natural to their sex, they showed an uncommon magnanimity on this melancholy occasion. For in contradiction to those of the Jews, who so vehemently required Jesus to be crucified as a deceiver, they proclaimed his innocence, by tears, cries, and lamentations, when they saw him led forth to suffer on Mount Calvary; accompanied him to the cross, the most infamous of all punishments; kindly waited on him in his expiring moments, giving him all the consolation in their power, though at the same time the sight of his sufferings pierced them to the heart; and when he expired and his body was carried off, they accompanied him to his grave, not despairing, though they found he had not delivered himself, but to appearance was conquered by death, the universal enemy of mankind. Perhaps these pious women entertained some faint hopes that he would still revive. Or, if they did not entertain expectations of that kind, they at least cherished a strong degree of love for their Lord, and determined to do him all the honor in their power.

A faith so remarkably strong, a love so ardent, and a fortitude so unshaken, could not fail of receiving distinguished marks of the divine approbation: and they were accordingly honored with the news of Christ's resurrection, before the male disciples had their eyes cheered with the first sight of their beloved Lord after he arose from the chambers of the grave; so that they preached the joyful tidings of his resurrection to the apostles themselves.

But there seem to have been other reasons why our great Redeemer showed himself first to the women. The thoughts of the apostles were constantly fixed on a temporal kingdom, and they had wrested all his words into an agreement with that favorite notion. And whatever they could not construe as con-

sonant to that opinion, they seemed either to have disbelieved or disregarded.

Hence, notwithstanding Jesus had repeatedly foretold his own sufferings, they were astonished above measure when they found he had expired on the cross. Immortality and terrestrial dominion were, according to their notion, the characteristics of the Messiah: for which reason, when they found that instead of establishing himself in the possession of universal empire, he had neither delivered himself from a handful of enemies, nor even from death, they gave over their hopes of his being the Messiah. And as for his resurrection, they seem not to have entertained the least notion of it; so that when the news of this great event was brought to them, they doubted the truth of the information.

Not so the women; they were more submissive to their Master's instruction, and consequently were much better prepared for seeing him after his resurrection, than the apostles; for though they did not expect that he would rise from the dead, yet they were not prejudiced against it. This cannot be said of the apostles: they not only absolutely rejected the matter, at first, as a thing incredible, but even after they were acquainted with the account the soldiers had given of this great transaction; nay, after they had seen the blessed Jesus himself, some of them were so unreasonable as still to doubt. How much rather then would their incredulity have led them to suspect his appearing as an illusion, had he showed himself to them? These reports led him to point out the arguments proper for disposing them to believe: particularly the prophecies that had been so often delivered in their own hearing, concerning his resurrection. Hence the angels, when they told this event to the women, and desired them to carry the news of it to his disciples, put them in mind of the predictions Jesus himself had made, as a confirmation of it. Hence we also see the reason why Jesus, before he had made himself known to the disciples at Emmaus, had prepared them for a discovery, by expounding to them on the road, the several prophecies concerning the Messiah, contained in the Old Testament.

The women on their arrival, told as many of the disciples as they could find, that they had seen at the sepulchre the appearance of angels, who assured them that Jesus was risen from the dead. This new information astonished the disciples exceedingly; and as they had before sent Peter and John to examine into the truth of what Mary Magdalene had told them, concerning the body being removed out of the sepulchre, so they now judged it highly proper to send some of their number to see the angels, and learn from them the joyful tidings of that

great transaction of which the women had given them an account.

That it was really the case, appears from what the disciples, in their journey to Emmaus, told their great Lord and Master; namely, that when the women came and told them that they had seen the angels, certain of their number went to the sepulchre, and found it even as the women had said, but him they saw not.

The second deputation from the apostles did not go alone: for as Mary Magdalene returned with Peter and John, who was sent to examine the truth of her information, so the women who brought an account of the appearance of angels, in all probability returned with those who were sent to be witnesses of the truth of their report. Besides curiosity, they had an errand thither. The angels had expressly ordered them to tell the news to Peter in particular; for which reason, when they understood that he was gone to the sepulchre, it is natural to think they would return with the disciples to seek him. About the time that the disciples and women set out for the sepulchre, Peter and John reached the city; but passing through a different street, did not meet their brethren.

The disciples having a great desire to reach the sepulchre, soon left the women behind, and just as they arrived, Mary Magdalene, having seen the Lord, was coming away. But they did not meet her, because they entered the garden at one door, while she was coming out at another. When they came to the sepulchre, they saw the angels, and received from them the news of their blessed Master's resurrection; for St. Luke tells us "They found it even as the women had said." Highly elated with what they saw, they departed and ran back to the city, with such expedition that they gave an account of what they had seen, in the hearing of the two disciples, before Mary Magdalene arrived.

Nor will their speed appear at all incredible, if we consider that the nature of the tidings the apostles had to carry gave them wings, as it were, to make their brethren partakers of their joy at this surprising transaction.

In the meantime, the company of women, who followed the disciples, happened to meet Peter and John. But they had not gone far from the sepulchre, before Jesus himself met them, and said, "All hail!" On which they approached their great Lord and Master, "held him by the feet and worshipped him." This favor of embracing his knees, Jesus had before refused to Mary Magdalene, because it was not then necessary; but he granted it to the women, because the angels' words having strongly impressed their minds with the notion of his resurrec-

tion, they might have taken his appearance for an illusion of their own imagination, had he not permitted them to touch him, and convince themselves, by the united reports of their senses, that he was their great Lord and Master, who was then risen from the dead, after having suffered on the cross for the sins of mankind.

This company of pious women having tarried some time with Jesus on the road, did not arrive with the joyful tidings of their great Master's resurrection, till some time after Peter and John: and perhaps were overtaken by Mary Magdalene on the road, unless we suppose that she arrived a few minutes before them. But be that as it may, this is certain, that they arrived either at, or near the same time, so that their accounts of this miraculous event tended to confirm each other.

The disciples were now lost in astonishment at what the women had related; they considered the account they had before given them, of their having seen the angels, as an improbability, and now they seem to have considered this as something worse: for the Evangelist tells us, that they "believed not."

Peter, indeed, to whom the angel sent the message, was disposed, by his sanguine temper, to give a little more credit to their words than the rest: possibly, because the messengers from the heavenly Canaan had done him the honor of naming him in particular.

Elated with the respect paid him in particular, he immediately repaired again to the sepulchre; hoping, in all probability, that his Master would appear to him, or at least, the angel, who had so particularly distinguished him from the rest of the disciples.

As soon as Peter arrived at the sepulchre, he stooped down, and seeing the linen clothes lying in the same manner as before, he viewed their position, the form in which they were laid, and returned, wondering greatly in himself at what had happened.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Jesus appears, on divers occasions, to different Disciples.—Reproves and convinces Thomas of his unbelief.—Shows himself to a great number of his followers in Galilee.

Soon after the women's first return to the disciples with the news that they had seen the appearance of angels, who told them that Jesus was risen from the dead, two of the brethren departed on their journey to a village called Emmaus, about two miles distant from Jerusalem. The concern they were in, on account of the death of their great and beloved Master, was sufficiently visible in their countenances. And as they pursued their journey, talking one with another, and debating about the things that had lately happened among them, concerning the life and doctrine, the sufferings and death of the holy Jesus, and of the report that was just spread among his disciples, of his being that very morning risen from the dead, Jesus himself overtook them, and joined company with them.

As he appeared like a stranger, they did not in the least suspect that their fellow-traveller was no other than the great Redeemer of the sons of men. He soon entered into discourse with them, by inquiring what event had so closely engaged them in conversation, and why they appeared so sorrowful and dejected, as if they had met with some heavy disappointment.

One of them, whose name was Cleophas, being surprised at the question, replied, Is it possible that you can be so great a stranger to the affairs of the world, as to have been at Jerusalem, and not to have heard the surprising events that have happened there? Events that have astonished the whole city, and are now the common topic of conversation among all the inhabitants? Jesus asked what surprising events he meant. To which Cleophas replied, The transactions which have happened concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who appeared as a great prophet and teacher sent from God; and accordingly was highly venerated among the people, for the excellency of his doctrine, his humility of life, and the number, benefit, and greatness of his miracles.

Our chief priests and elders therefore envying him as one who lessened their authority over the people, apprehended him, and found means to put him to death.

But we firmly believed he would have proved himself the Messiah, or great Deliverer: and this persuasion we a long time supported; nor were we willing to abandon it, even when we saw him put to death. But it is now three days since

these things were done: and therefore we begin to fear we were mistaken.

This very morning, indeed, a thing happened, which extremely surprises us, and we are very solicitous with regard to the event. Some women, who had entertained the same hopes and expectations as we, going early in the morning to pay the last duties to their Master, by embalming his body, returned with great haste to the city, and informed us that they had been to the sepulchre, but were disappointed in not finding the body; and to increase our surprise, they added, that they had seen an appearance of angels, who told them that Jesus was risen from the dead.

This relation seemed at first to us not probable; nay, altogether incredible; but two of the company going immediately after to the sepulchre, found every thing exactly as the women had reported; they saw the angels, but heard not any thing of the body: so that we are still in doubt and perplexity, with regard to this wonderful event.

In reply, Jesus said, Why are ye so very averse to believe all that the prophets have with one voice predicted concerning the Messiah? Is it not clearly and very expressly foretold in all the prophetic writings, that it was appointed by the counsel of Omnipotence for the Messiah to suffer in this manner; and that after sustaining the greatest indignities, reproach, and contempt, from the malice and perverseness of mankind, and even undergoing an ignominious and cruel death, he should be exalted to a glorious and eternal kingdom? Having said this, he began at the writings of Moses, and explained to them, in order, all the principal passages, both in the books of the great legislator, and the writings of the other prophets, relating to his own sufferings, death, and glorious resurrection.

And this he did with such surprising plainness, clearness, and strength, that the two disciples, not yet suspecting who he was, were as much amazed to find a stranger so well acquainted with all that Jesus did and suffered, as they at first wondered at his appearing to be totally ignorant of these transactions. They were also astonished to hear him interpret and apply the Scriptures to their present purpose with such readiness and convincing clearness of argument, as carried with it a strange and unusual authority and efficacy. When, therefore, they came to the village whither they were going, and Jesus seemed as if he would have passed on, and travelled further, they, desirous of his company, pressed him in the strongest manner, to tarry with them that night, as it was then late.

To this request the great Redeemer of mankind consented; and when they were set down to supper, he took bread and gave thanks to God, and brake it, and gave it to them, in the

same manner he used to do, while he conversed with them upon earth, before his death. This engaged their attention, and looking steadfastly on him, they perceived it was their great and beloved Master.

But they had no time to express their joy and astonishment to their benevolent Redeemer: for he immediately vanished out of their sight.

As soon as they found their Master was departed, they said one to another, How slow and stupid we were before, not to know him upon the road, while he explained to us the scriptures; when, besides the affability of his discourse, and the strength and clearness of his argument, we perceived such an authority in what he said, and such a powerful efficacy attending his words, and striking our hearts with affection, that we could not but have known him (if we had not been remarkably stupid) to have been the very same that used to accompany his teaching, and was peculiar to it.

This surprising event would not admit them to stay any longer in Emmaus. They returned that very night to Jerusalem, and found the apostles, with several other disciples, discoursing about the resurrection of their Master; and on their entering the room the disciples accosted them, saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon."

They had given little credit to the reports of the women, supposing they were occasioned more by imagination than reality. But when a person of Peter's capacity and gravity declared he had seen the Lord, they began to think that he was really risen from the dead. And their belief was greatly confirmed by the arrival of the two disciples from Emmaus, who declared to their brethren how Jesus appeared to them on the road, and how they discovered him to be their Master by the circumstances before related.

While the disciples from Emmaus were thus describing the manner of the appearance of Jesus to them, and offering arguments to convince those who doubted the truth of it, their great Master himself put an end to the debate, by standing in the midst of them, and saying, "Peace be unto you."

This appearance of our blessed Saviour greatly terrified the disciples, who supposed they had seen a spirit; for, having secured the doors of the house where they were assembled for fear of the Jews, and Jesus having opened the locks by his miraculous power, without the knowledge of any in the house, it was natural for them to think, that a spirit only could enter. The circumstance therefore of the doors being shut is very happily mentioned by St. John; because it suggests a reason why the disciples took their Master for a spirit, notwithstanding many of them were convinced that he was really risen from th

dead, and were at that moment conversing about his resurrection.

But, to dispel their fears and doubts, Jesus came forward, and spoke to them in the most endearing accent; showed them his hands and his feet, and desired them to handle him, in order to convince themselves by the united powers of their different senses, that it was he himself, and no spectre or apparition. "Why are ye troubled," said the benevolent Redeemer of mankind, "and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have."

These infallible proofs sufficiently convinced the disciples of the truth of their Lord's resurrection, and they received him with rapture and exultation. But their joy and wonder had so great an effect upon their minds, that some of them sensible of the great commotion they were in, suspended their belief, till they had considered the matter more calmly. Jesus, therefore, knowing their thoughts, called for meat and ate with them, in order to prove more fully the truth of his resurrection from the dead, and the reality of his presence with them on this occasion.

After giving this farther ocular demonstration of his having vanquished the power of death, and opened the tremendous portals of the grave, he again repeated his salutation, "Peace be unto you." Adding, "The same commission that my Father hath given unto me, I give unto you: go ye therefore into every part of the world, and preach the Gospel to all the children of men." Then breathing on them, he said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost, to direct and assist you in the execution of your commission. Whosoever embraces your doctrine, and sincerely repents, ye shall remit his sins, and your sentence of absolution shall be ratified and confirmed in the courts of heaven. And whosoever either obstinately rejects your doctrine, disobeys it, or behaves himself unworthily after he hath embraced it, his sins shall not be forgiven him; but the censure ye shall pass upon him on earth shall be confirmed in heaven."

Thomas, otherwise called Didymus, was absent at the meeting of the apostles; nor did this happen without the special direction of Providence, that the particular and extraordinary satisfaction which was afterwards granted him, might be an abundant and undeniable testimony of the truth of our blessed Saviour's resurrection to all succeeding generations. The rest of the apostles therefore told him, that they had seen the Lord, and repeated to him the words he had delivered in their hearing. But Thomas replied, "This event is of such great importance, that unless to prevent all possibility of deception, I see him with my own eyes, and feel him with mine own hands, putting

my fingers into the print of his nails, whereby he was fastened to the cross, and thrust my hand into his side, which the soldier pierced with his spear; I will not believe that he is really and truly risen from the dead."

Thus have we enumerated in the most explicit manner, the transactions of that day on which the great Redeemer of mankind arose from the dead; a day highly to be remembered by the children of men, throughout all generations. A day, in which was fully completed and displayed the conceptions lodged in the breast of infinite Wisdom! even those thoughts of love and mercy, on which the salvation of the world depended. Christians have therefore the highest reason to solemnize this day with gladness, each returning week, by ceasing from their labor, and giving up themselves to prayer, pious meditations, and other exercises of religion. The redemption of mankind, which they weekly commemorate, affords matter for eternal thought; it is a subject impossible to be equalled, and whose lustre neither length of time, nor frequent reviewing, can either tarnish or diminish. It resembles the sun, which we behold, always the same glorious and luminous object; for the benefit we celebrate is, after so many ages, as fresh and beautiful as ever, and will always continue the same, flourishing in the memories of pious people, through the endless revolutions of eternity. Redemption is the brightest mirror by which we contemplate the goodness of the Almighty. Other gifts are only mites from the divine treasure; but redemption opens, I had almost said, exhausts all the stores of his grace. May it be constantly the favorite subject of our meditations, more delightful to our musing minds, than applause to the ambitious ear! May it be the darling theme to our discourse; sweeter to our tongues than the dropping of the honey-comb to the taste! May it be our choicest comfort through all the changes of this mortal life; and the reviving cordial, even in the last extremities of dissolution itself.

Eight days after the resurrection of our great Redeemer, the blessed Jesus showed himself again to his disciples, while Thomas was with them; and upbraided that disciple for his unbelief; but knowing that it did not, like that of the Pharisees, proceed from a wicked mind, but from an honest heart, and a sincere desire of being satisfied of the truth, he thus addressed himself to his doubting disciple: "Thomas," said he, "since thou wilt not be contented to rely on the testimony of others, but must be convinced by the experience of thy own senses, behold the wounds in my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and doubt no longer of the reality of my resurrection."

Thomas immediately obeyed the kind invitation of his dear Master, and being fully satisfied according to his own desire, he cried out, "I am abundantly convinced; thou art, indeed, my Lord, the very same that was crucified; and I acknowledge thine Almighty power in having triumphed over death, and worship thee as my God."

To which the blessed Jesus replied: "Because thou hast both seen and felt me, Thomas, thou hast believed that I am really risen from the dead. But blessed are they who without such evidence of the senses, shall, upon credible testimony, be willing to believe and embrace a doctrine which tends so greatly to the glory of God, and the salvation of the sons of men."

St. John adds, that the blessed Jesus appeared, on several other occasions, to his disciples, after his resurrection: and by many clear and infallible proofs (not mentioned by the Evangelist) fully convinced them that he was alive after his passion. But those which are mentioned are abundantly sufficient to induce men to believe that Jesus was the Son of God, the great Messiah, so often foretold by the ancient prophets; and that by means of that belief, they may attain everlasting life, in the happy regions of the heavenly Canaan.

Our blessed Saviour having, first by the angels, and afterwards in person, ordered his disciples to repair to their respective habitations in Galilee, it is reasonable to think they would leave Jerusalem as soon as possible. This they accordingly did, and on their arrival at their respective places of abode, applied themselves to their usual occupations; and the apostles returned to their old trade of fishing, on the lake of Tiberias. Here they were toiling with their nets, very early in the morning, and saw Jesus standing on the shore, but did not then know him to be their Master, as it was something dark, and they at a considerable distance from him. He however called to them and asked if they had taken any fish; to which they answered, they had caught nothing. He then desired them to let down their nets on the right side of the boat, and they should not be disappointed.

The disciples imagining that he might be acquainted with the places proper for fishing, did as he directed them, and enclosed in their net such a prodigious multitude of fishes, that they were not able to draw it into the boat, but were forced to drag it after them in the water towards the shore.

It seems they had toiled all the preceding night to no purpose; and, therefore, such remarkable success could not fail of causing various conjectures among them with regard to the stranger on the shore who had given them such happy advice. Some of the apostles declared they could not imagine who he was; but others were persuaded that this person was no other

than their great and beloved Master. John was fully convinced of his being the Lord, and accordingly told his thoughts to Simon Peter, who making no doubt of it, girded on his fisher's coat, and leaped into the sea, in order to get ashore sooner than the boat could be brought to land, dragging after it a net full of large fishes.

When the disciples came ashore, they found a fire kindled, and on it a fish broiling, and near it some bread. But neither being sufficient for the company, Jesus bade them bring some of the fish they had now caught, and invited them to eat with him. Thus did the blessed Jesus prove again to his disciples the reality of his resurrection, not only by eating with them, but by working a miracle, like that which, at the beginning of his ministry, had made such an impression upon them, as disposed them to be his constant followers.

This was the third time that Jesus appeared publicly to a great number of his disciples in a body, besides his showing himself at several times to particular persons, upon special occasions.

When they had eaten, Jesus reminded Peter how diligent and zealous he ought to be in order to wipe off the stain of his denying him when he was carried before the high priest. "Simon, son of Jonas," said our blessed Saviour to him, "art thou more zealous and affectionate in thy love towards me than the rest of my disciples?" To which Peter answered, "Yea, Lord: thou knowest that I love thee." He was taught modesty and diffidence by his late fall; and therefore would not compare himself with others, but humbly appealed to his Master's omniscience, for the sincerity of his regard to him. Jesus answered, Express then thy love towards me, by the care of my flock committed to thy charge. "Feed my lambs; feed my sheep." Show your love to me, by publishing the great salvation I have accomplished; and feeding the souls of faithful believers with that food which never perishes, but endures for ever and ever.

"I well know, indeed," continued the blessed Jesus, "that thou wilt continue my faithful shepherd, even until death. For the time will come, when thou who now girdest on thy fisher's coat voluntarily, and stretchest out thy hands to come to me, shalt in thine old age be girt by others, and forced to stretch out thy hands against thy will, in a very different manner, for the sake of thy constant profession of my religion."

By these last words, Jesus signified the manner of Peter's death, and that he should finally suffer martyrdom, for the glory of God, and the testimony of the truth of the Christian religion.

The time being now come, when the disciples were to meet their great Lord and Master, according to the messages he had

sent them by the women, and in all probability appointed at some former appearance, not mentioned by the Evangelists, the brethren set out for the mountains in Galilee, perhaps that on which he was tranfigured. Here five hundred of them were gathered together, expecting the joyful sight of their great Master, after he had triumphed over death and the grave; some of them not having yet seen him after his resurrection.

They did not wait long before Jesus appeared, on which they were seized with rapture, their hearts overflowed with gladness, they approached their kind, their benevolent Master, and worshipped him. Some few, indeed, doubted; it being then agreeable to nature for men to be afraid to believe what they vehemently wish, lest they should indulge themselves in false joys, which vanish like a morning cloud. But Jesus afterwards appeared frequently to them, and gave them full satisfaction, and instructed them in many things relating to their preaching the gospel, establishing the church, and spreading it through the whole earth.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Our blessed Lord instructs his Disciples in what manner they should conduct themselves in order to propagate the doctrine of the Gospel.—Promises to assist them in this important business.—Gives them his final blessing, and ascends into Heaven.—Comparison between Moses the great lawgiver, and our blessed Saviour.—General review of the life and doctrines of the great Redeemer of mankind.

A FEW days before the feast of Pentecost, or the "feast of weeks," the disciples went up to Jerusalem, where the blessed Jesus made his last appearance to them; and after instructing them in many particulars concerning the kingdom of God, and the manner they were to behave themselves in propagating the doctrine of the gospel, he put them in mind, that during his abode with them in Galilee, he had often told them that all things written in the law, the prophets, and the Psalms, concerning him, were to be exactly accomplished. At the same time, "he opened their understandings;" that is, he removed their prejudices, by the operations of his Spirit, cleared their doubts, improved their memories, strengthened their judgments, and enabled them to discern the true meaning of the Scriptures.

Having thus qualified them for receiving the truth, he again assured them that both Moses and the prophets had foretold that the Messiah was to suffer in the very manner he had suffered; that he was to rise from the dead on the third day, as he had done; and that repentance and remission of sins were to be preached in the Messiah's name, among all nations, beginning with the Jews.

He next delivered unto them their commission to preach the doctrine of repentance and remission of sins, in his name, among all nations, and to testify unto the world the exact accomplishment, in him, of all things foretold concerning the Messiah; and to enable them to perform this important work, promised to bestow on them the miraculous gift of the Spirit, which he called the promise of his Father: because the Almighty had promised it by his prophets.

Having thus fortified them for the important work they were going to undertake, he led them to the mount of Olives, as far as Bethany; where, standing on a hill above the town, he told them that he was going to ascend to his Father; for which reason they might go courageously through all the world, and preach the Gospel to every rational creature; that they who believed should be admitted into his church by the rite of baptism, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: and be taught in consequence of their baptism, to obey all the precepts he had enjoined them: that such baptized believers should receive the pardon of their sins, together with eternal life in the happy mansions of his Father's kingdom; but such as refused to embrace the doctrines of the Gospel should be for ever excluded those happy regions, and have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone: that while they were employed in this work, he would be constantly with them to assist them by his Spirit, and protect them by his providence. Finally, that those who should, through their preaching, be induced to believe, should themselves work most astonishing miracles, by which the Gospel should be propagated with the greatest rapidity.

When the blessed Jesus had spoken these things, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And in the action of blessing them, he was parted from them, in the midst of the day, a shining cloud received him out of their sight; that is, this brilliant cloud encompassed him about, and carried him up to heaven; not suddenly, but at leisure, that they might behold him departing, and see the proof of his ascending into heaven, as he had promised them.

The cloud in which the blessed Jesus ascended was more bright and pure than the clearest lambent flame, being no other than the shechinah, or glory of the Lord; the visible symbol

THE ASCENSION.

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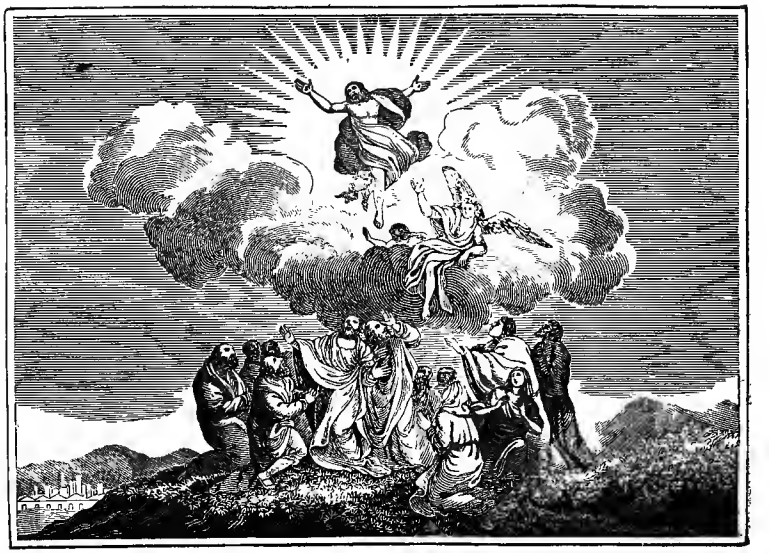

"And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy."—LUKE XXIV. 51, 52.

of the divine presence which had so often appeared to the patriarchs of old: which filled the temple at its dedication, and which in its greatest splendor, could not be beheld with mortal eyes; for which reason it is called the light inaccessible.

As he ascended, the flaming cloud that surrounded him marked his passage through the air, but gradually lost its magnitude in the eyes of those who stood below; till it at last vanished, together with their beloved Master, out of their sight.

Thus was the great Redeemer of mankind triumphantly carried into heaven, where he now sitteth at the right hand of God his Father, to whom be honor, glory, and power for ever and ever. Amen.

Hosanna to the prince of light,
That clothed himself in clay;
Enter'd the iron gates of death,
And tore their bars away.

Death is no more the king of dread,
Since Christ our Lord arose;
He took the tyrant's sting away,
And spoil'd our hellish foes.

See how the conqu'ror mounts aloft
And to his Father flies,
With scars of honor in his flesh,
And triumph in his eyes.

There our exalted Saviour reigns,
And scatters blessings down;
Our Jesus fills the right hand seat
Of the celestial throne.

In this illustrious manner did the great Redeemer of mankind depart, after having finished the grand work which he left the bosom of his Father to execute; which angels with joy described was to happen, and which, through all eternity to come, shall, at periods the most immensely distant from the time of its execution, be looked back upon with inexpressible delight, by every inhabitant of heaven; for though the minute affairs of time may vanish altogether and be lost, when they are removed far back by the endless progression of duration, this object is such, that no distance, however great, can lessen. The kingdom of heaven is erected on the incarnation and sufferings of the Son of God, the kingdom and city of the Almighty, comprehending all the people of God in the universe, made happy by goodness and love, and therefore none of them can ever forget the foundation on which their happiness stands established. The human beings, in particular, recovered by the labor of the Son of God, will view their deliverer, and look back on his stupendous undertaking, with the highest rapture, while they are feasting, without interruption on its delicious fruits. The

angels, likewise, the celestial inhabitants of the city of God, will contemplate it with perpetual pleasure, as the happy means of recovering their kindred that were lost, and bringing them to a joint and proper subjection to him who reigneth for ever, and whose favor is better than life itself.

Thus have we followed our dear Redeemer through all the transactions of his life, and enlarged on the stupendous miracle of his resurrection, on which glorious event the whole Christian doctrine is founded.

As the similarity between Christ and the lawgiver Moses (whom the divine Redeemer mentioned to his disciples but a short time before his ascension into heaven) is so very remarkable, we shall, as an illustration of the glorious subject, point out a few instances, which will evince that the prophecies of old were only to be completed in the sufferings and death of Christ.

Moses was the most distinguished of all the prophets, and his greatest prophecy was that of another prophet to be raised like unto himself. He was, at the time of this prediction, about to leave his people, and therefore, to give them some comfort, he promised them another prophet. "The Lord thy God," said he, "will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken." *Deut.* xviii. 15.

That this person, of whom Moses prophesied, was the great Redeemer of mankind is amply evident, and that Moses resembled Christ in a much greater degree than any other person ever did, will appear from the following circumstances.

Both Moses and Christ showed *signs* and *wonders*, and in these respects none of the ancient prophets were like unto Moses. None of them were lawgivers, they only interpreted and enforced the laws of Moses. None of them had such clear communications with God; they all *saw visions*, and dreamed dreams. Moses and Christ are the only two who perfectly resembled each other in these respects.

Moses fled from his country to escape the hands of the king of Egypt: so did Christ when his parents went into Egypt. Afterwards "the Lord said unto Moses, in Midian, Go, return into Egypt; for all the men are dead which sought thy life," *Exod.* iv. 19: so the angel of the Lord said to Joseph, in nearly the same words, "Arise, and take the young child, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead which sought the young child's life." *Matt.* ii. 20. Pointing him out, as it were, for that prophet who should arise, like unto Moses.

Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction: Christ refused to be made king, choosing rather to suffer the like.

"Moses," says St. Stephen, "was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians;" and Josephus says that he was a very forward and accomplished youth, and had wisdom and knowledge above his years. St. Luke observes of Christ, that "he increased (betimes) in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man," and his discourses in the temple with the doctors, when he was but twelve years old, were a proof of it.

Moses was not only a lawgiver, a prophet, and a worker of miracles, but a king and a priest: in all these offices the resemblance between Moses and Christ was singular.

Moses brought darkness over the land: the sun withdrew his light at Christ's crucifixion: and as the darkness which spread over Egypt was followed by the destruction of their first-born, and of Pharaoh and his host; so the darkness at Christ's death was the forerunner of the destruction of the Jews.

Moses foretold the calamities which would befall the nation for their disobedience: so did Christ.

The spirit which was in Moses was conferred in some degree upon the seventy elders, and they prophesied: Christ conferred miraculous powers on his seventy disciples.

Moses was victorious over powerful kings and great nations: so was Christ, by the effect of his religion, and by the fall of those who persecuted the church.

Moses conquered Amalek by holding up both his hands: Christ overcame his and our enemies when his hands were fastened to the cross.

Moses interceded for transgressors, and caused an atonement to be made for them, and stopped the wrath of God: so did Christ.

Moses ratified a covenant between God and the people, by sprinkling them with blood: Christ with his own blood.

Moses desired to die for the people, and prayed that God would forgive them, or blot him out of his book: Christ did more, he died for sinners.

Moses instituted the passover, when a lamb was sacrificed, none of whose bones were to be broken, and whose blood protected the people from destruction: Christ was the paschal lamb.

Moses lifted up the serpent, that they who looked upon him might be healed of their mortal wounds: by properly looking up to Christ, all will be healed.

All the affection of Moses towards the people, all his cares and toils on their account, were repaid by them with ingratitude, murmuring and rebellion: the same returns the Jews made to Christ for all his benefits.

Moses was ill-used by his own family; his brother and sister

rebelled against him: there was a time when Christ's own brethren believed not on him.

Moses had a very wicked and perverse generation committed to his care and conduct; and to enable him to rule them, miraculous powers were given to him, and he used his utmost endeavors to make the people obedient to God, and to save them from ruin; but in vain: in the space of forty-two years they all fell in the wilderness, except two: Christ also was given to a generation not less wicked and perverse, his instructions and his miracles were lost upon them, and in about the same space of time, after they had rejected him, they were destroyed.

Moses was very meek above all men that were on the face of the earth: so was Christ.

The people could not enter into the land of promise until Moses was dead: by the death of Christ the kingdom of heaven was opened to believers.

Moses enlightened the Jews under the dispensation of the old law: Christ enlightened the Christians under the Gospel.

Moses did great wonders in the land of Egypt: Christ did great miracles in Judea.

In the deaths of Moses and Christ there is a resemblance in some circumstances: Moses died in some sense, for the iniquities of the people; it was their rebellion which was the occasion of it, which drew down the displeasure of God upon them, and upon him; Moses went up in the sight of the people to the top of mount Nebo, and there he died, when he was in perfect vigor, when "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated:" Christ suffered for the sins of men, and was led up, in the presence of the people, to Mount Calvary, where he died in the flower of his age, and when he was in his full natural strength.

Neither Moses nor Christ, as far as we can collect from sacred history, were ever sick, or felt any bodily decay or infirmity, which would have rendered them unfit for the toils they underwent; their sufferings were of another kind.

Moses was buried, and no man knew where his body lay: nor could the Jews find the body of Christ.

Lastly, as Moses, a little before his death, promised "another prophet;" so Christ, before his death, promised "another Comforter."

"Moses," says St. Ambrose, "was the figure of that Preceptor that was to come; who should preach the Gospel, fulfil the Old Testament, build the New, and feed the people with celestial aliment."

Such are the comparisons relative to the great resemblance between Moses and Christ; but the greatest similitude consists in their both being *lawgivers*, which no other prophet ever was.

They may resemble each other in many other circumstances, and a fruitful imagination may strike upon farther resemblances; but what we have been mentioning may suffice; and we may ask, Is this similitude between Moses and Christ the effect of mere chance? Let us search all the records of universal history, and see if we can find a man who was so like to Christ as Moses was. If we cannot find such an one, then have we found him of wnom Moses, in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God.

We shall conclude this chapter with a few observations on the general conduct of our blessed Redeemer, during his peregrination on earth.

The human character of the blessed Jesus, as it results from the account given of him by the Evangelists, for they have not formally drawn it up, is entirely different from that of all other men whatsoever; for whereas they have selfish passions deeply rooted in their breasts, and are influenced by them in almost every thing they do, Jesus was so entirely free from them, that the most severe scrutiny cannot furnish one single action in the whole course of his life wherein he consulted his own interest only. No; he was influenced by very different motives: the present happiness and eternal welfare of sinners, regulated his conduct; and while others followed their respective occupations, Jesus had no other business than that of promoting the happiness of the sons of men. Nor did he wait till he was solicited to extend his benevolent hand to the distressed: "he went about doing good," and always accounted it "more blessed to give than to receive;" resembling God, rather than man. He went about doing good; benevolence was the very life of his soul: he not only did good to objects presented to him for relief; but he industriously sought them out, in order to extend his compassionate assistance.

It is common for persons of the most exalted faculties to be elated with success and applause, or dejected by censure and disappointments; but the blessed Jesus was never elated by the one, or depressed by the other. He was never more courageous than when he met with the greatest opposition and cruel treatment; nor more humble than when the sons of men worshipped at his feet.

He came into the world inspired with the grandest purpose that ever was formed: that of saving from eternal perdition, not a single nation, but the whole world; and in the execution of it went through the longest and heaviest train of labors that ever was sustained, with a constancy and resolution, on which no disadvantageous impression could be made by any accident whatever. Calumny, threatenings, bad success, with many other evils, constantly attending him, served only to quicken his en

deavors in this glorious enterprise, which he unweariedly pursued even till he had finished it by his death.

The generality of mankind are prone to retaliate injuries received, and all seem to take a satisfaction in complaining of the cruelties of those who oppress them; whereas the whole of Christ's labors breathed nothing but meekness, patience, and forgiveness, even to his bitterest enemies, and in the midst of the most excruciating torments. The words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," uttered by him when his enemies were nailing him to the cross, fitly express the temper which he maintained through the whole course of his life, even when assaulted by the heaviest provocations. He was destined to sufferings, here below, in order that he might raise his people to honor, glory, and immortality, in the realms of bliss above; and therefore patiently, yea joyfully, submitted to all that the malice of earth and hell could inflict. He was vilified that we might be honored: he died, that we might live for ever and ever.

To conclude: the greatest and best men have discovered the degeneracy and corruption of human nature, and shown them to have been nothing more than men: but it was otherwise with Jesus. He was superior to all the men that ever lived, both with regard to the purity of his manners, and the perfection of his virtues. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners.

Whether we consider him as a teacher, or as a man, "he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." His whole life was perfectly free from spot or weakness; at the same time it was remarkable for the greatest and most extensive exercises of virtue. But never to have committed the least sin in word or in deed; never to have uttered any sentiment that could be censured, upon the various topics of religion and morality, which were the daily subjects of his discourses; and that through the course of a life filled with action, and led under the observation of many enemies, who had always access to converse with him, and who often came to find fault, is a pitch of perfection evidently above the reach of human nature; and consequently he who possessed it must have been divine.

Such was the person who is the subject of the evangelical history. If the reader, by reviewing his life, doctrine, and miracles, as they are here represented to him, united into one series, has a clearer idea of these things than before, or observes a beauty in his actions thus linked together, which, taken separately, do not appear so fully: if he feels himself touched by the character of Jesus in general, or with any of his sermons and actions in particular, thus simply delineated in writing, whose principal charms are the beauties of truth: above all, if

his dying so generously for men strikes him with admiration, or fills him with joy in the prospect of that pardon which is thereby purchased for the world: let him seriously consider with himself, what improvement he ought to make of the divine goodness.

Jesus, by his death, hath set open the gates of immortality to the sons of men; and by his word, spirit, and example, graciously offers to make them meet for the glorious rewards in the kingdom of the heavenly Canaan, and to conduct them into the inheritance of the saints of light. Let us, therefore, remember, that being born under the dispensation of his Gospel, we have, from our earliest years, enjoyed the best means of securing to ourselves an interest in that favor of God, which is life, and that loving kindness which is better than life.

We have been called to aspire after an exaltation to the nature and felicity of the Almighty, exhibited to mortal eyes in the man Christ Jesus, to fire us with the noblest ambition. His Gospel teaches us that we are made for eternity; and that our present life is to our future existence, as infancy is to manhood. But, as in the former, many things are to be learned, many hardships to be endured, many habits are to be acquired, and that by a course of exercises which in themselves, though painful, and possibly useless to the child, yet are necessary to fit him for the business and enjoyments of manhood: so while we remain in this infancy of human life, things are to be learned, hardships to be endured, and habits to be acquired, by a laborious discipline, which, however painful, must be undergone, because necessary to fit us for the employments and pleasures of our riper existence, in the realms above; always remember that whatever our trials may be in this world, if we ask for God's assistance, he has promised to give it. Inflamed, therefore, with the love of immortality and its joys, let us submit ourselves to our heavenly teacher, and learn of him those graces which alone can render life pleasant, death desirable, and fill eternity with ecstatic joys.

CHAPTER XLV.

Remarks on the peculiar nature of the Christian religion, the principles it inculcates, and its fitness to render men holy and humble here, and happily glorified hereafter.

We cannot close this delightful scene of the life of our dear Lord and Saviour more comfortably, than by considering the benefits resulting from a due attendance to his doctrines to all, who shall, by faith, receive and embrace the same.

Probably none have been greater enemies to the progress of religion than those who delineate it in a gloomy and terrifying form: nor any guilty of a more injurious calumny against the Gospel, than those who represent its precepts as rigorous impositions, and unnecessary restraints.

True religion is the perfection of human nature, and the foundation of uniform exalted pleasure; of public order and private happiness. Christianity is the most excellent, and the most useful institution, having the "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." It is the voice of reason; it is also the language of Scripture, "the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;" and our blessed Saviour assures us, that his precepts are easy, and the burden of his religion light.

The Christian religion is a rational service, a worship "in spirit and truth," a worship worthy of the majesty of the Almighty to receive, and of the nature of man to pay. It comprehends all we ought to believe, and all we ought to practice; its positive rites are few, in plain and easy significancy, and manifestly adapted to establish a sense of our obligation to God and Christ.

The Gospel places religion, not in abstruse speculation and metaphysical subtilties; not in outward show, and tedious ceremony; not in superstitious austerities and enthusiastic visions, but in purity of heart, and holiness of life. The sum of our duty, according to our great Master himself, consists in the *love of God* and *of our neighbor;* according to St. Paul, in denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and in living soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world; according to St. James, in visiting the fatherless and widows in affliction, and in keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. This is the constant strain and tenor of the Gospel. This it inculcates most earnestly, and on this it lays the greatest stress.

But is the Christian system only a republication of the law of nature, or merely a refined system of morality? No, certainly;

it is a great deal more. It is an act of grace, a stupendous plan of Providence, designed for the recovery of mankind, from a state of degradation and ruin, to the favor of the Almighty, and to the hopes of a happy immortality through a Mediator.

Under this dispensation, true religion consists in a "repentance towards God," and "in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ," as the person appointed by the supreme authority of heaven and earth, to reconcile apostate man to his offended Creator; as a sacrifice for sin; our vital head and governing Lord. This is religion, as we are Christians. And what hardships, what exaction is there in all this? Surely, none. Nay, the practice of religion is much easier than the servitude of sin.

Our rational powers, all will readily agree, are dreadfully impaired and the soul weakened, by sin. The animal passions are strong and corrupt, and oppose the dictates of the Spirit of God: objects of sense make powerful impressions on the mind. We are, in every situation, surrounded with many snares and temptations. In such a disordered state of things, we cannot please God, till created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. We must be born again; born from above.

The God of all grace has planted in the human breast a quick sense of good and evil; a faculty which strongly dictates right and wrong: and though by the strength of appetite and warmth of passion men are often hurried into immoral practices, yet in the beginning, especially when there has been the advantage of a good education, it is usually with reluctance and opposition of mind. What inward struggles precede! what bitter pangs attend their sinful excesses! what guilty blushes and uneasy fears! what frightful prospects and pale reviews! "Terrors are upon them, and a fire not blown consumeth them." To make a mock at sin, and to commit iniquity without remorse, is an attainment that requires length of time, and much painful labor; more labor than is requisite to attain that habitual goodness which is the glory of the man, the ornament of the Christian, and the chief of his happiness.

The soul can no more be reconciled to acts of wickedness and injustice, than the body to excess, but by suffering many bitter pains, and cruel attacks.

The mouth of conscience may, indeed, be stopped for a while, by false principles: its secret whispers may be drowned by the noise of company, and stifled by entertainments of sense; but this principle of conscience is so deeply rooted in human nature, and, at the same time, her voice is so clear and strong, that the sinner's arts will be unable to lull her into a lasting security.

When the hour of calamity arrives, when sickness seizeth, and death approacheth the sinner, conscience then constrains

him to listen to her accusations, and will not suffer the temples of his head to take any rest. "There is no peace to the wicked;" the foundations of peace are subverted, they are at utter enmity with their reason, with their conscience, and with their God.

Not so is the case of true religion. For when religion, pure and genuine, forms the temper, and governs the life, conscience applauds, and peace takes her residence in the breast. The soul is in its proper state. There is order and regularity both in the faculties and actions. Conscious of its own integrity, and secure of the divine approbation, the soul enjoys a calmness not to be described. But why do I call this happy frame calmness only? It is far more than mere calmness. The air may be calm, and the day overcast with thick mists and dark clouds. The pious and virtuous mind resembles a serene day, enlightened and enlivened with the brightest rays of the sun. Though all without may be clouds and darkness, there is light in the heart of a pious man. "He is satisfied from himself, and is filled with peace and joy in believing." In the concluding scene, the awful moment of dissolution, all is peaceful and serene. The immortal part quits its tenement of clay, with the well-grounded hopes of ascending to happiness and glory.

Nor does the Gospel enjoin any duty but what is fit and reasonable. It calls upon all its professors to practice reverence, submission, and gratitude to God; justice, truth, and universal benevolence to men; and to maintain the government of our own minds. And what has any one to object against this? From the least to the greatest commandment of our dear Redeemer, there is not one which impartial reason can find fault with. "His law is perfect: his precepts are true and righteous altogether." Not even those excepted which require "us to love our enemies, to deny ourselves," and to "take up our cross." To forgive an injury is more generous and manly than to revenge it: to control a licentious appetite, than to indulge it: to suffer poverty, reproach, and even death itself, in the sacred cause of truth and integrity, is much wiser and better, than, by base compliances, to make "shipwreck of faith and a good conscience."

Thus in a storm at sea, or a conflagration on the land, a man with pleasure abandons his lumber to secure his jewels. Piety and virtue are the wisest and most reasonable things in the world: —vice and wickedness the most irrational and absurd.

The all-wise author of our being hath so framed our natures, and placed us in such relations, that there is nothing vicious, but what is injurious; nothing virtuous, but what is advantageous to our present interest, both with respect to body and

mind. Meekness and humility, patience, and universal charity, and grace, give a joy "unknown to transgressors."

The divine virtues of truth and equity are the only bands of friendship, the only supports of society. Temperance and sobriety are the best preservatives of health and strength; but sin and debauchery impair the body and consume the substance, reduce to poverty, and form the direct path to immature and untimely death. Now this is the chief excellency of all laws; and what will always render their burden pleasant and delightful is, that they enjoin nothing unbecoming or injurious.

Besides, to render our duty easy, we have the example, as well as the commands of the blessed Jesus. The masters of morality among the heathens gave excellent rules for the regulation of men's manners; but they wanted either the honesty, or the courage, to try their own arguments upon themselves. It was a strong presumption that the yoke of the scribes and pharisees was grievous, when they laid "heavy burdens upon men's shoulders," which they themselves refused to touch with one of their fingers. Not thus our great lawgiver, Jesus Christ, the righteous. His behaviour was in all respects, conformable to his doctrine. His devotion towards God, how sublime and ardent! Benevolence towards men, how great and diffusive! He was in his life a pattern of innocence; for he "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." In the Son of God incarnate, is exhibited the brightest, the fairest resemblance of the Father, that earth or heaven ever beheld; an example peculiarly persuasive, calculated to inspire resolution, and to animate us to use our utmost endeavors to imitate the divine pattern, the example of "the author and finisher of our faith," of "*him* who loved us and gave himself for us." "Our profession and character, as Christians, obliges us to make this example the model of our lives. Every motive of decency, gratitude, and interest, constrain us to tread the paths he trod before us.

We should also remember, that our burden is easy; because God, who "knoweth whereof we are made, who considereth that we are but dust," is ever ready to assist us. The heathen sages themselves, had some notion of this assistance, though guided only by the glimmering lamp of reason. But what they looked upon as probable, the Gospel clearly and strongly asserts. We there hear the apostle exhorting, "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." We there hear the blessed Jesus himself arguing in this convincing manner: "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

We should also remember that the great doctrine of the Gospel, concerning the propitious mercy of God to all penitents, through Jesus Christ, greatly contributes to the consolation of Christians. Let it be granted that the hope of pardon is essential to the religion of fallen creatures, and one of its first principles, yet, considering the doubts and suspicions which are apt to arise in a mind conscious of guilt, it is undoubtedly a great and inestimable favor, to be relieved, in this respect, by a messenger from Omnipotence himself. This is our happiness. We are not left to depend upon consequential reasonings, which the bulk of mankind are little used to; but we are assured, that upon our true repentance, we shall, "through the mediation of Christ," receive the "full remission of past sins," and be restored to the same state and favor with our Maker, as if we had never transgressed his laws. Here the Gospel triumphs. With these assurances it abounds. Upon this head the declarations of our blessed Saviour and his apostles are so express and full, that every one who believes them, and knows himself to be a true penitent, must banish every doubt and fear, and rejoice with joy unspeakable. "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." *Matt.* xi. 28. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." *Matt.* xii. 31. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses." *Acts*, xiii. 38, 39. "The blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin." What grace and favor is this! Who can dwell upon the transporting theme too long! Now our way is plain before us, and the burden we are to bear is made easy. Our sins are pardonable, if repented of and forsaken.

Consider this, all ye who have never yet regarded religion, but pursued a course of vice and sensuality all your lives long.—Though your conduct has been base, to the last degree, your case is not desperate. Far from it. The God whom you have so highly offended commiserates your errors, is ever ready to extend his pardoning mercy to his most degenerate creatures, upon their faith and repentance, and "is in Christ Jesus reconciling the world to himself," not imputing unto *penitent* sinners their trespasses. "Let the wicked, *therefore*, forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." *Isaiah*, lv. 7.

Another particular, which renders the Christian religion delightful is, its leading us to the perfect, eternal life of heaven. It cannot be denied, but that we may draw from the light of nature strong presumptions of a future state. The present ex-

istence does not look like an entire scene, but rather like the infancy of human nature, which is capable of arriving at a much higher degree of maturity; but whatever solid foundation the doctrine of a future state may have, in nature and reason, certain it is, through the habitual neglect of reflection, and the force of irregular passions, this doctrine was, before the coming of our blessed Saviour, very much disfigured, and in a great measure lost among the sons of men.

In the heathen world, a future state of rewards and punishments, was a matter of mere speculation and uncertainty, sometimes hoped for, sometimes doubted of, and sometimes absolutely denied. The law of Moses, though of divine original, is chiefly enforced by the promises of temporal blessings; and, even in the writings of the prophets, a future immortality is very sparingly mentioned, and obscurely represented: but the doctrine of our Saviour hath "brought life and immortality to light." In the Gospel we have a distinct account of another world, attended with many engaging circumstances, about which the decisions of reason were dark and confused. We have the testimony of the Author of our religion, who was raised from the dead, who afterwards, in the presence of his disciples ascended into heaven. In the New Testament it is expressly declared, that good men, "when absent from the body, are present with the Lord." Here we are assured of the resurrection of the body in a glorious form, clothed with immortal vigor, suited to the active nature of the animating spirit, and assisting its most enlarged operations and incessant progress towards perfection. Here we are assured, that "the righteous shall go into life everlasting;" that they shall enter into the kingdom of the heavenly Canaan, where no ignorance shall cloud the understanding, no vice disturb the will. In these regions of perfection, nothing but love shall possess the soul; nothing but gratitude employ the tongue: there the righteous shall be united to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first born; there they shall see their exalted Redeemer, at the right hand of Omnipotence, and sit down with him on his throne; there they shall be admitted into the immediate presence of the supreme Fountain of life and happiness, and beholding his face, be changed into the same image from glory to glory.—Here language—here imagination fails me! It requires the genius, the knowledge, and the pen of an angel, to paint the happiness, the blissful scene of the New Jerusalem, which the human eye cannot behold, till this mortal body shall be purified from its corruption, and dressed in the robes of immortality: "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart to conceive, the joys which God hath prepared for them that love him."

What is the heaven of the heathens, compared with the heaven of the Christians? The hope, the prospect of this, is sufficient to reconcile us to all the difficulties that may attend our progress, sweeten all our labors, alleviate every grief, and silence every murmur.

But why, says the libertine in the gaiety of his heart, should there be any difficulties or restraints at all? God hath made nothing in vain. The appetites he hath planted in the human breast are to be gratified. To deny or restrain them, is ignominious bondage: but to give full scope to every desire and passion of the heart, without check or control, is true manly freedom.

In opposition to this loose and careless way of reasoning, let it be considered, that the liberty of a rational creature doth not consist in an entire exemption from all control, but in following the dictates of reason, as the governing principle, and in keeping the various passions in due subordination. To follow the regular motion of those affections which the wise Creator hath implanted within us, is our duty: but as our natural desires, in this state of trial, are often irregular, we are bound to restrain their excesses, and not to indulge them, but in a strict subserviency to the integrity and peace of our minds, and to the order and happiness of human society established in the world. Those who allow the supreme command to be usurped by sensual and brutal appetites, may "promise themselves liberties," but are truly and absolutely the "servants of corruption." To be vicious, is to be enslaved. We behold with pity those miserable objects that are chained in the galleys, or confined in dark prisons and loathsome dungeons; but much more abject and vile is the slavery of the sinner! No slavery of the body is equal to the bondage of the mind: no chains press so closely or gall so cruelly, as the fetters of sin, which corrode the very substance of the soul, and fret every faculty.

It must, indeed, be confessed, that there are some profligates, so hardened by custom, as to be past all feeling; and because insensible of their bondage, boast of this insensibility as a mark of their native freedom and happiness. Vain men! they might extol, with equal propriety, the peculiar happiness of an apoplexy, or the profound tranquillity of a lethargy.

Thus have we endeavored to place, in a plain and conspicuous light, some of the peculiar excellencies of the Christian religion; and from hence, many useful reflections will naturally arise in the mind of every attentive reader. It is the religion of Jesus that hath removed idolatry and superstition, and brought immortality to light, when concealed under the veil of darkness almost impenetrable. This hath set the great truths of religion in a clear and conspicuous point of view, and pro-

posed new and powerful motives to influence our minds, and to determine our conduct. Nothing is enjoined to be believed, but what is worthy of God; nothing to be practised, but what is friendly to man. All the doctrines of the Gospel are rational and consistent: all its precepts are truly wise, just, and good.—The Gospel contains nothing grievous to an ingenuous mind: it debars us from nothing, but doing harm to ourselves, or to our fellow-creatures; and permits us to range any where, but in the paths of danger and destruction. It only requires us to act up to its excellent commands; and to prefer, to the vanishing pleasure of sin, the smiles of a reconciled God, and "an eternal weight of glory." And is this a rigorous exaction, and a heavy burden not to be endured? How can sinful mortals harbor so unworthy a thought?

Surely no man, who is a real friend to the cause of virtue and to the interests of mankind, can ever be an enemy to Christianity, if he truly understands it, and seriously reflects on its wise and useful tendency. It conducteth us to our journey's end, by the plainest and securest path; where the "steps are not straitened, and where he that runneth stumbleth not."—Let us, who live under this last and most gracious dispensation of God to mankind, "count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord;" and not suffer ourselves, by the slight cavils of unbelievers, to be "moved away from the hope of the gospel." Let us demonstrate that we believe the superior excellency of the Christian dispensation, by conforming to its precepts. Let us show that we are Christians in deed and in truth: not by endless disputes about trifles, and the transports of a blind zeal, but by abounding in those "fruits of righteousness, which are, through Christ, to the praise and glory of God."

From what has been said, we may clearly perceive how groundless all those prejudices are, which some conceive against religion, as if it was a peevish, morose scheme, burdensome to human nature, and inconsistent with the true enjoyment of life. Such sentiments are too apt to prevail in the heat of youth, when the spirits are brisk and lively, and the passions warm and impetuous; but it is wholly a mistake, and a mistake of the most dangeorous tendency. The truth is, there is no pleasure like that of a good conscience: no real peace but what results from a sense of divine favor. This ennobles the mind, and can alone support it under the various and unequal scenes of the present state of trial. This lays a sure foundation of an easy, comfortable life, of a serene, peaceful death, and of eternal joy and happiness hereafter; whereas, vice is ruinous to all our most valuable interests; spoils the native beauty, and subverts the order of the soul; renders us the scorn of man, the re-

jected of God, and, without timely repentance, will rob us of a happy eternity. Religion is the health, the liberty, and the happiness of the soul; sin is the discase, the servitude, and destruction of it.

If this be not sufficient to convince you, let me lead you into the chamber of an habitual rioter, the lewd debauchee, worn out in the cause of iniquity, "his bones full of the sins of his youth," that from his own mouth, as he lies on his expiring bed, you may learn that "the way of transgressors is hard;" and that, however sweet sin may be in the commission, "it stings like a serpent, and bites like an adder."

I am going, reader, to represent to you the last moments of a person of high birth and spirit; of great parts and strong passions; every way accomplished, but unhappily attached to those paths which lead to vice and destruction.

His unkind treatment was the death of a most amiable wife: and his monstrous extravagance, in effect, disinherited his only child. And surely the death bed of a profligate is next in horror to that abyss to which it leads! It has the most of hell that is visible upon earth, and he that hath seen it has more than faith to confirm him in his creed. I see it now (says the worthy divine from whom I shall borrow this relation,) for who can forget it? Are there in it no flames and furies? You are ignorant then of what a sacred imagination can figure! what a guilty heart can feel! How dismal it is! The two great enemies of soul and body, sickness and sin, sink and confound his friends; silence and darkness are the dismal scene. Sickness excludes the light of heaven, and sin its blessed hope. Oh, double darkness, more than Egyptian! acutely to be felt!

The sad evening before the death of that noble youth, whose last hours suggested these thoughts, I was with him. No one else was there but his physician, and an intimate acquaintance, whom he loved, and whom he had ruined. At my coming, he said,

"You and the physician are come too late.—I have neither life nor hope. You both aim at miracles. You would raise the dead."

"Heaven," I said, "was merciful."—

"Or I could not," answered he, "have been thus guilty.—What has it not done to bless and to save me?—I have been too strong for Omnipotence. I plucked down ruin."

I said "The blessed Redeemer"—

"Hold, hold," said he, "you wound me! This is the rock on which I split! I denied his name."

Refusing to hear any thing from me, or take any thing from the physician, he lay silent, as far as sudden darts of pain would permit, till the clock struck. Then he cried out with vehe-

mence,—"Oh time! time! It is fit thou shouldst thus strike thy murderer to the heart. How art thou fled for ever!—A month!—Oh, for a single week! I ask not for years, though an age were too little for the much I have to do."

On my saying to him, "We could not do too much; that heaven was a blessed place!"

"So much the worse," replied he, "'tis lost! 'tis lost! Heaven is to me the severest part of hell!"

Soon after, I proposed prayer. To which he answered,—

"Pray, you that can! I never prayed. I cannot pray. My conscience is too much wounded. I have deserted my benevolent Maker, and my soul is enveloped in the deepest horrors."

His friend, being much touched, even to tears, at this, (for who could forbear? I could not,) he, with a most affectionate look, said,

"Keep these tears for thyself, I have undone thee. Dost thou weep for me? That is cruel. What can pain me more?"

Here his friend, too much affected, would have left him.

"No," said he, "stay. You may still hope; therefore, hear me. How madly have I talked!—How madly hast thou listened and believed! But look on my present state, as a full answer to thee and to myself. This body is all weakness and pain; but my soul, as if stung up by torment to greater strength and spirit, is full powerful to reason; full mighty to suffer. And that which thus triumphs within the joys of mortality, is doubtless immortal. And as for a Deity, nothing less than an Almighty could inflict the pains I feel."

I was about to congratulate this passive, involuntary confession, in his asserting the two prime articles of his creed, extorted by the rack of nature; when he thus very passionately added,

"No, no! let me speak on. I have not long to speak. My much injured friend! My soul, as my body, lies in ruins; in scattered fragments of broken thought; remorse for the past, throws my thoughts on the future. Worse dread of the future strikes it back on the past. I turn, and turn, and find no ray. Didst thou feel half the mountain that is on me, thou wouldst struggle with the martyr for his stake, and bless heaven for the flame;—that is not an everlasting flame: that is not an unquenchable fire."

How were we struck! yet soon after, still more. With what an eye of distraction, what a face of despair he cried out,—"My principles have poisoned my friend: my extravagance has beggared my boy: my unkindness has murdered my wife:—And is there another hell? Oh! thou blasphemed, yet most indulgent Lord God! Hell itself is a refuge, if it hides me from thy frown."

Soon after, his understanding failed; his terrified imagination uttered horrors not to be repeated, or ever forgotten; and before the sun (which I hope has seen few like him) arose, this gay, young, noble, ingenious, accomplished, and most wretched mortal expired.

It must, indeed, be owned, it sometimes happens, that men who have lived very wicked lives, have gone out of the world, as they have lived in it, defying conscience, and deriding a future judgment as an idle fiction; but these instances are very rare, and only prove that there are monsters in the moral as well as the natural world.

It will perhaps be said, that the sons of vice and riot have pleasure in sensual indulgences. Allowed; but it is altogether of the lower kind, empty, fleeting, and transient: "like the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the mirth of the wicked." It makes a noise and a blaze for the present, but soon vanishes away into smoke and vapor.

On the other hand, the pleasure of religion is solid and lasting; and will attend us through all, even the last stages of life. When we have passed the levity of youth, and have lost our relish for the gay entertainments of sense; when old age steals upon us, and stoops us towards the grave, this will cleave fast to us, and give us relief. It will be so far from terminating at death, that it then commences perfect, and continually improves, with new additions.

Clad in this immortal robe, we need not fear the awful summons of the king of terrors, nor regret our retiring into the chambers of the dust. Our immortal part will wing its way to the arms of its Omnipotent Redeemer, and find rest in the heavenly mansions of the Almighty. And though our earthly part, this tabernacle of clay, returns to its original dust, and is dissolved, our joy, our consolation, our confidence is, that "we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

THE

LIVES OF THE APOSTLES.

ST. PETER.

CHAPTER I.

Account of the Life of St. Peter, prior to his call to the Apostleship of the blessed Jesus.

St. Peter was born at Bethsaida, a city of Galilee, situate on the banks of the lake of Gennesareth, called also the sea of Galilee, from its being situated in that country, and the lake of Tiberias, from that city being built on its banks. The particular time of this great apostle's birth cannot be known; the Evangelist and other writers among the primitive Christians, having been silent with regard to this particular. It is, however, pretty certain, that he was at least ten years older than his Master; the circumstances of his being married, and in a settled course of life, when he first became a follower of the great Messiah, and that authority and respect the gravity of his person procured him among the rest of the apostles, sufficiently declare this conjecture to be just.

As he was a descendant of Abraham, he was circumcised, according to the rites of the Mosaic law, and called by his parents Simon or Simeon, a name common at that time among the Jews. But after his becoming a disciple of the blessed Jesus, the additional title of Cephas was conferred upon him by his Master, to denote the firmness of his faith: the word Cephas, in the Syriac, the common language of the Jews at that time, signifying a stone, or rock: and thence he is called, in Greek, *Petros*, and by us Peter, which implies the same thing.

With regard to the parents of St. Peter, the Evangelists have also been silent, except in telling us that his father's name was Jonah, who was highly honored by our blessed Saviour, who chose two of his sons, Andrew and Peter, to be his apostles,

and preachers of the glad tidings of salvation to the children of men.

St. Peter, in his youth, was brought up to the trade of fishing, on the lake of Bethsaida, famous for different kinds of fish, which excelled all others in the fineness of their taste.

Here he followed the trade of fishing, but afterwards removed to Capernaum, where he settled; for we find he had a house there when our Saviour began his public ministry, and there he paid tribute. Nicephorus tells us that Helen the mother of Constantine, erected a beautiful church over the ruins of St. Peter's house, in honor of that apostle.

The business of Peter was both mean and toilsome; it exposed him to all the injuries of the weather, the tempestuousness of the sea, and the darkness and horror of the night, and all to acquire a mean livelihood for himself and family. But meanness of worldly degree is no obstacle to the favor of God: nay, if we review the state of Christianity, from its rise to the present period, we shall find that its friends and votaries consist rather of persons of humble and lowly stations in life, than of the great, the dignified, and the opulent.

And herein are manifested the wise and admirable methods used by Divine Providence, in making choice of such mean and unlikely instruments in planting and propagating the Christian religion in the world. Men who were destitute of the advantages of education, and brought up to the meanest employments, were chosen to confound the wise, and overturn the learning of the great. Such were the persons whom the Almighty sent to propagate the religion of his Son; to silence the wise, the scribe, and the disputer of this world, and to make foolish the wisdom of the earth. For though the Jews required a sign, and the Greeks sought after wisdom; though the preaching of a crucified Saviour made no impression on the former, and wisdom became of little avail to the latter; yet by this preaching God was pleased to save them that believed, and in the event made it appear, that the wisdom of God passeth all understanding—That so the honor of all may redound to himself, "that no flesh should glory in his presence, but that he that glorieth should glory in the Lord."

CHAPTER II.

The manner by which Peter arrived to the knowledge of the blessed Jesus, and of his call to the discipleship.

Sacred history hath not ascertained of what sect the apostle was. We know indeed, that his brother Andrew was a follower of John the Baptist, that preacher of repentance; and it is very unlikely that he, who was ready to carry his brother the early tidings of the Messiah, that the "sun of righteousness" was already risen in those parts, should not be equally solicitous to bring him under the discipline and influence of John the Baptist, the day-star which appeared to usher in the appearance of the Son of God. Besides, Peter's great readiness and curiosity at the first news of Christ's appearing, to come to him and converse with him, shows, that his expectation had been awakened, and some glimmering rays of hope conveyed to him by the preaching and ministry of John, who was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

He became acquainted with the immaculate Lamb of God, in the following manner: The blessed Jesus having spent thirty years in the solitude of a private life, had lately been baptized by John in Jordan, and there owned by the solemn attestation of heaven to be the Son of God; whereupon he was immediately hurried into the wilderness, and there for forty days maintained a personal contest with the devil. But having conquered this great enemy of mankind, he returned to "the place beyond Jordan," where John was baptizing his proselytes, and endeavoring to answer the Jews, who had sent a deputation to him to inquire concerning this new Messiah that appeared among them. To satisfy these curious inquirers of Israel, John faithfully related every thing he knew concerning him, gave him the greatest character, and soon after, pointed him out to his disciples; upon which two of them presently followed the great Redeemer of mankind, one of which was Andrew, Simon's brother.

Nor did he conceal the joyful discovery he had made; for early in the morning he hastened to acquaint his brother Simon that he had found the Messiah. It is not enough to be happy alone: grace is a communicative principle, that, like the circles in the water, delights to multiply itself, and to diffuse its influences all around, especially on those whom nature has placed nearest to us. I have, said he, with rapture to his brother, found that eminent person so long and signally foretold by the

prophets, and whom all the devout and pious among the sons of Jacob so earnestly expected.

Simon, who was one of those who waited for the redemption of Israel, ravished with the joyful news, and impatient of delay presently followed his brother to the place; and on his arrival our blessed Saviour immediately gave him a proof of his divinity; saluting him at first sight by his name, and telling him both who he was, his name and kindred, and what title should soon be conferred upon him.

In order to avoid the prodigious throng of people, our great Redeemer often retired to some solitary place, to indulge the privacies of contemplation. In one of these retreats, on the banks of the sea of Galilee, the multitude found him out, and ran to him from the city. Our Saviour, therefore, to avoid the crowd, stepped into a fishing boat which lay near the shore, and belonged to Simon Peter, who, together with his companions, were on shore, drying their nets, after an unsuccessful night spent in toil and labor. The blessed Jesus, who might have commanded, was pleased to entreat Peter, who now returned to his boat to thrust off a little from the land, that he might instruct the people, who were gathering in prodigious crowds on the borders of the lake.

Peter gladly complied with the request of his Master, who delivered his heavenly doctrine to the people on the shore. As soon as he had ended his discourse, he resolved to seal it by a miracle, that the people might be persuaded he was "a teacher come from God." Accordingly he ordered Simon to row farther from the shore, and cast his net into the sea. To which Simon answered, that they had labored the preceding night, and had taken nothing; and, if they could not then succeed, there were little hopes of it now, as the day was far less proper for fishing than the night. But as his Master was pleased to command, he would obey; and accordingly he let down his net, when, to the astonishment both of him and of his companions, so great a multitude of fishes were enclosed, that they were obliged to call their partners to their assistance. Amazed at this miraculous draught of fishes, Simon Peter, in an ecstasy of admiration, blended with awe and humility, fell prostrate at his Master's feet, acknowledging himself a vile and sinful person, and thinking himself unworthy of being admitted into the presence of a person so immediately sent from God. But the compassionate Son of the Most High kindly removed his fears; telling him that this miracle was wrought to confirm his faith, and indicate to him that the Almighty had appointed a more noble employment for him, that of saving the souls of the children of men. From this time Peter and his companions became the inseparable and con-

stant disciples of the great Messiah, living under the rules of his discipline and institutions.

CHAPTER III.

Peculiar transactions of this Apostle, from the time of his being chosen, to his blessed Master's entering the City of Jerusalem.

THE blessed Jesus, having entered upon his important mission, thought proper to select some peculiar persons from among his followers, to be constant witnesses of his miracles and doctrine, and who, after his departure, might be intrusted with the care of building his church, and planting that religion in the world, for which he himself left the mansions of heaven, and put on the veil of mortality. In order to this, he withdrew privately, in the evening, to a solitary mountain, where he spent the night in solemn addresses to his Almighty Father, for rendering the great work he was going to undertake prosperous and successful.

The next day, early in the morning, the disciples came to him, out of whom he made choice of twelve to be his Apostles, and the attendants on his person.

These he afterwards invested with the power of working miracles, and sent them into different parts of Judea, in order to carry on with more rapidity the great work which he himself had so happily begun.

We have no farther account of St. Peter in particular, till the night after our Saviour's miraculously feeding the multitude in the wilderness. Jesus had ordered his disciples to take ship, and pass over to the other side, while he sent the multitude away. But a violent storm arising, they were in great danger of their lives, when their great Master came unto them, walking on the surface of the boisterous billows, with the same ease as if it had been dry ground.

At his approach the disciples were greatly terrified, supposing they had seen a spirit. But their compassionate Master soon dispelled their fears, by telling them it was he himself, and therefore they had no reason to be terrified.

Peter, who was always remarkable for bold resolutions, desired his Master to give him leave to come to him on the water; and on obtaining permission, he left the ship, and walked on the sea to meet his Saviour. But when he heard the deep roar around him, and the waves increase, he began to be afraid;

and as his faith declined, his body sunk in the water; so that in the greatest agony he called for assistance to him who was able to save. Nor was his cry in vain; the compassionate Redeemer of mankind stretched out his hand, and again placed him on the surface of the water, with this gentle reproof, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" And no sooner was the blessed Jesus and his disciple entered into the ship, than the winds ceased, the waves subsided, and the ship was at the land whither they were going.

A miracle of this kind could not fail of astonishing the disciples, and convincing them of the divinity of his mission; accordingly they drew near and worshipped him, with this confession, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God."

The inhabitants of Judea, who beheld with astonishment the miracles wrought by the blessed Jesus, had formed many conjectures concerning him. Our great Redeemer was not ignorant of this: but being willing to hear what account his disciples would give of the various opinions of the people, asked them what the world said concerning him? To which they replied, that some took him for John the Baptist risen from the dead; some thought him to be Elias, and others Jeremiah, or one of the old prophets. He asked them what they themselves thought of him: to which Peter, in the name of the rest, answered, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," anointed and set apart by the Most High, to be the great King, Priest, and Prophet of Israel.

This full and comprehensive declaration of Peter, satisfied the inquiry of our blessed Saviour, who answered, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

The disciples had no idea that their Master was to suffer death for the sins of the world: on the contrary, they considered him as immortal, having imbibed the opinion of the Scribes and Pharisees, "that Christ abideth for ever:" so that when the blessed Jesus told them of the sufferings he must undergo at Jerusalem, what affronts and indignities he must suffer, and be at last put to death with all the acts of torture and disgrace, by a sentence of the Jewish Sanhedrim, Peter, who could not endure the thought of his Master's suffering even the least punishment, much less those cruelties he had mentioned, and at last death itself, interrupted him very unseasonably, and said, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." He considered these sufferings as inconsistent with the character of the great Messiah, whom he expected would restore the splendor of the throne of David his father, and reduce all the kingdoms of the earth to his obedience. But our blessed Saviour who came down from heaven, to give his life a ransom for the

sins of the world, and who valued the redemption of mankind infinitely more than his own ease and safety, highly resented this speech of St. Peter, and accordingly returned this sharp reproof; "Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me." Thy pernicious counsels, in seeking to oppose the design for which I purposely left the courts of heaven, are offensive; and thou "savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

Some time after the great Redeemer of the souls of men, being to receive a specimen of his future glorification, took with him three of his most intimate apostles, Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and went up into a very high mountain, and while they were employed in earnest addresses to the Almighty, he was transfigured before them, darting such lustre from his face, as exceeded the meridian rays of the sun in brightness; and such beams of light issued from his garments, as exceeded the light of the clearest day; an evident and sensible representation of that state, when the "just shall walk in white robes, and shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." During this heavenly scene, the great prophets Moses and Elias appeared in all the brightness and majesty of a glorified state, familiarly conversing with him, and discoursing of the death and sufferings he was shortly to undergo, and his ascension to the heavenly regions of bliss and happiness.

In the mean time Peter and the two apostles were fallen asleep; but on their awaking were strangely surprised to see the Lord surrounded with so much glory, and those two great persons conversing with him. They, however, remained silent till those visitants from the courts of heaven were going to depart, when Peter in rapture and ecstasy of mind, addressed himself to his Master, declared their infinite pleasure and delight in being favored with this glorious spectacle; and desired his leave to erect three tabernacles, one for him, one for Moses, and one for Elias. But while he was speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed these two great prophets, and a voice came from it, uttering these remarkable words, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." On which the apostles were seized with the utmost consternation, and fell upon their faces to the ground; but Jesus, touching them, bid them dismiss their fears, and look up with confidence; they immediately obeyed, but saw their Master only.

After this heavenly scene, our blessed Lord travelled through Galilee, and at his return to Capernaum, the tax-gatherers came to Peter, and asked him, whether his Master was not obliged to pay tribute? When our blessed Saviour was informed of this demand, rather than give offence, he wrought a miracle to pay it. Our great Redeemer was now going, for the last time,

to Jerusalem; and he ordered two of his disciples, probably Peter and John, to fetch him an ass, that he might enter into the city on it, as had been foretold. The disciples obeyed their Master, and brought the ass to Jesus, who being mounted thereon, entered the city amidst the hosannas of a numerous multitude, with palm-branches in their hands, proclaiming at once both the majesty of a prince, and the triumph of a Saviour.

CHAPTER IV.

Life of St. Peter, from the time of the celebration of the last Passover to the Crucifixion of the great Redeemer.

THE blessed Jesus proceeded from Jerusalem to Bethany, from whence he sent two of his disciples, Peter and John, to make preparations for celebrating the passover.

Every thing being ready, our blessed Saviour and his apostles entered the house, and sat down to the table. But their great Master, who often taught them by example as well as precept, arose from his seat, laid aside his upper garment, took the towel, and pouring water into a basin, began to wash his disciples' feet, to teach them humility and charity, by his own example. But on his coming to Peter, he would by no means admit his Master to perform so mean and condescending an office. What! the Son of God stoop to wash the feet of a sinful mortal! A thought which shocked the apostle, who strenuously declared, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." But the blessed Jesus told him, that if he washed him not, he could have no part with him: intimating, that this action was mystical, and signified the remission of sins, and the purifying virtue of the Spirit of the Most High, to be poured upon all true Christians. This answer sufficiently removed the scruples of Peter, who cried out, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Wash me in every part, rather than let me lose my portion in thee.

The blessed Jesus having set this pattern of humility, began to reflect on his approaching sufferings, and on the person who should betray him into the hands of wicked and cruel men, telling them, that not a stranger, or an enemy, but one of his friends, one of his apostles, and even one of them who then sat at the table would betray him.

This declaration exceedingly affected them all in general, and Peter in particular, who made signs to St. John, to ask him particularly who it was. Jesus complied with this request, and gave them to understand that it was Judas Iscariot.

Our great Redeemer now began the institution of his supper, that great and solemn institution, which he resolved to leave behind him, to be constantly celebrated in his church, as a standing monument of his love in dying for mankind; telling them at the same time that he himself was now going to leave them, and that "whither he went, they could not come." Peter, not well understanding what he meant, asked him whither he was going. To which our great Redeemer replied, that he was going to that place whither he could not now, but should hereafter follow him: intimating the martyrdom he was to suffer for his Master's religion. Peter answered, that he was ready now to follow him, even if it required him to lay down his life. This confident presumption was not at all agreeable to the blessed Jesus, who told him he had promised great things, but would be so far from performing them, that before "the cock crew" he would deny him thrice.

Supper being now ended, they sung an hymn, and departed to the Mount of Olives; where Jesus again put them in mind how greatly the things he was going to suffer would offend them. To which Peter replied, that "though all men should be offended because of him, yet he himself would never be offended." How far will an indiscreet zeal and affection transport even a good man into vanity and presumption! Peter questions the fidelity of others, but never doubts his own: though his Lord had just before reproved him for his self-sufficiency. This confidence of Peter inspired the rest of the apostles with courage: so that they declared their constant and unshaken adherence to their Master.

They now repaired to the garden of Gethsemane; and leaving the rest of the apostles near the entrance, our blessed Saviour, taking with him Peter, James, and John, retired into the most solitary part of the garden, to enter on the preparatory scene of the great tragedy that was now approaching.

Here the blessed Jesus labored under the bitterest agony that ever human nature suffered, during which he prayed with the utmost fervency to his Father, "offering up prayers and supplications with strong cryings and tears; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

While our blessed Redeemer was thus interceding with the Almighty, his three disciples were fallen asleep, though he had made three several visits to them, and calling to Peter, asked him if he could not watch one hour with him. Advising them all to watch and pray, that they might not enter into tempta-

tion, adding, "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

What incomparable sweetness! what generous candor did the Redeemer of mankind display on this occasion! he passed the most charitable censure upon an action which malice and ill-nature would have painted in colors as black as the shades of darkness.

The disciples were drowned in a profound security, and were buried in a deep sleep, and though often awaked and informed of the approaching tragedy, they little regarded the admonitions, as if nothing but ease and softness engaged their thoughts: an action which seemed to imply the most amazing ingratitude, and the highest disregard for their Lord and Master.

But he, who was compassion itself, would not impute it to their want of affection, or disregard for his safety: he considered it merely as the effect of their infirmities, and made an excuse for them when they could make none for themselves; teaching us the useful lesson of putting the most favorable construction on the actions of others: and to imitate the bee and not the spider, by sucking honey, instead of poison, from the various transactions of human life.

While he was discoursing with them, a band of soldiers, from the chief priests and elders preceded by the traitor Judas, to conduct and direct them, rushed into the garden, and seized the great high priest of our profession. Peter, whose ungovernable zeal would admit of no restraint, drew his sword, and, without the least order from his Master, struck at one of the persons who seemed to be remarkably busy in binding Jesus, and cut off his right ear. This wild and unwarrantable zeal was very offensive to his Master, who rebuked Peter, and entreated the patience of the soldier while he miraculously healed the wound.

But now the fidelity of the apostles, which they had urged with so much confidence, was put to the trial. They saw their Master in the hands of a rude and inconsiderate band of men; and therefore should have exerted their power to release him, or at least have been the companions of his sufferings, and endeavored by every kind, endearing action, to have lessened his grief. But alas! instead of assisting or comforting their great Master, they forsook him and fled.

The soldiers after binding Jesus, led him away, and delivered him to the chief priests and elders, who carried him from one tribunal to another, first to Annas, and then to Caiaphas, where the Jewish Sanhedrim were assembled, in order to try and condemn him.

In the mean time, Peter, who had followed the other disciples in their flight, recovered his spirits, and being encouraged by his companion St. John, returned to seek his Master. Seeing him leading to the high-priest's hall, he followed at a distance to know the event: but on his coming to the door, was refused admittance, till one of the disciples who was acquainted there, came out, and prevailed upon the servant who kept the door, to let him in. Peter, being admitted, repaired to the fire, burning in the middle of the hall, round which the officers and servants were standing; where, being observed by the maid servant, who let him in, she charged him with being one of Christ's disciples: but Peter publicly denied the charge, declaring that he did not know him, and presently withdrew into the porch, where, being secluded from the people, the reflection of his mind awakened his conscience into a quick sense of his duty, and the promise he had a few hours before made to his Master. But alas! human nature, when left to itself, is remarkably frail and inconstant. This Peter sufficiently experienced; for while he continued in the porch, another maid met him, and charged him with being one of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth, which Peter firmly denied, and, the better to gain belief, ratified it with an oath.

About an hour after this, the servant of the high priest, he whose ear Peter had cut off, charged him with being a disciple of Christ, and that he himself had seen him in the garden with him: adding that his very speech sufficiently proved that he was a Galilean. Peter, however, still denied the fact; and, to his sin, ratified it not only by an oath, but a solemn curse and execration, that "he was not the person," and that "he knew not the man." But no sooner had he uttered this denial, (which was the third time) than the "cock crew;" at which his Master turned about and earnestly looked upon him in a manner that pierced him to the heart, and brought to his remembrance what his Saviour had more than once foretold, namely, that he would basely and shamefully deny him. Peter was now no longer able to contain his sorrow: he flew from the palace of the high-priest, and "wept bitterly," passionately bewailing his folly, and the aggravations of his sin.

The fall of St. Peter should convince us of the miserable frailty, even of the best of men, and effectually subdue those vain confidences which are apt to rise in our hearts, from our own supposed strength and virtue. For, as this great disciple fell in so scandalous a manner, who shall hereafter dare to depend upon the highest degree of knowledge, when one so wise, so perfectly satisfied of the truth of the Christian doctrine, was, after the fullest convictions of his own conscience, so weak and frail, as to deny and abjure his Lord who instructed and bought

him even at the price of his own blood? Who shall presume upon his best resolutions, when he who declared so firm a purpose of adhering to Jesus, did, within a few hours peremptorily and solemnly disown that very person, for whose sake he was lately ready and disposed to lay down his life.

We ought, therefore, on all occasions, to pray for and rely on the Divine assistance, which alone can enable us to stand in a day of trial. There is, indeed, no reason to doubt that St. Peter at that time spoke the very sense of his soul; that he had an honest and sincere heart, was steadfastly determined, and as he thought, able to perform, what, with so much piety and affection, he intended and professed. But his misfortune was, that he did not consider the infirmities of human nature, promising, in the warmth of his zeal, more than he was able to perform. He relied on his own integrity, thinking good resolutions a sufficient defence against the most violent temptations. But when the assault was made, and danger, with her terrifying aspect appeared, the event sufficiently proved, that how willing soever the spirit might be, yet the flesh was exceedingly frail and weak.

We have in St. Peter an example for our instruction. The opinion of his own strength proved his ruin. So dangerous and fatal is it to lean on our own understandings; to be wise, good, and safe, in our own conceit; when all our sufficiency, all our safety, is of God.

CHAPTER V.

An account of what befell this Apostle from the Resurrection of his blessed Master, to his Ascension into Heaven.

It is certain, from various circumstances, that Peter, after the crucifixion of his Lord and Master, stayed at Jerusalem, or at least in the neighborhood, for when Mary Magdalene returned from the sepulchre to inform the disciples that the stone was rolled away from the door, and the body not to be found, Peter and John set out immediately towards the garden. John, who was the younger, arrived at the sepulchre first, looked into it, but did not enter, either out of fear or reverence to our Saviour. Peter came soon after, and resolutely went into the sepulchre, where he found the linen clothes lying together in one place, and the napkin that was about his head wrapped together in another, a sufficient indication that the body was not stolen

away; for had that been the case, so much care and order would not have been observed in disposing of the linen clothes.

But Peter did not wait long in suspense, with regard to his great Lord and Master; for the same day Jesus appeared to him; and as he was the first of the disciples who had made a signal confession of the divinity of the Messiah's mission, so it was reasonable he should first see him, after his resurrection, and at the same time to convince him that the crime he had been guilty of, in denying him, was pardoned, and that he was come, like the good Samaritan, to pour oil into the wounded conscience.

Soon after the apostles prepared to obey the command of their great Master, of retiring into Galilee; and we find that Peter, Nathaniel, the two sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples, returned to their old trade of fishing in the lake.

One morning early, as they were laboring at their employment, having spent the whole night to no purpose, they saw on the shore a grave person, who called to them, and asked them if they had any meat? To which they answered, No. Cast then, replied he, the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They followed his directions, and caught a prodigious number of large fish. Astonished at such remarkable success, the disciples looked upon one another for some time, till St. John told Peter, that the person on the shore was, doubtless, their great Lord and Master, whom the winds, the sea, and the inhabitants of the watery region, were ready to obey.

Peter no sooner heard the beloved disciple declare his opinion concerning the stranger, than his zeal took fire, and, notwithstanding the coldness of the season, he girt on his fisher's coat, threw himself into the sea, and swam to shore; his impatience to be with his dear Lord and Master not suffering him to stay the few minutes necessary to bring the ship to land.

As soon as the disciples came on shore, they found a fire kindled, and a fish laid upon it, either immediately created by the power of their divine Master, or which came ashore of its own accord, and offered itself to his hand. But notwithstanding there were fish already on the fire, he ordered them to bring those they had now caught, and dress them for their repast, he himself eating with them; both to give them an instance of mutual love and friendship, and also to assure them of the truth of his human nature, since he was risen from the dead.

When the repast was ended, our blessed Saviour addressed himself particularly to Peter, urging him to the utmost diligence in the care of souls: and because he knew that nothing but a sincere love to himself could support him under the trouble and dangers of so laborious and difficult an employment, he

inquired of him, whether he loved him more than the rest of the apostles: mildly reproving him for his over-confident resolution. Peter, whom fatal experience had taught humility, modestly answered, that none knew so well as himself the integrity of his affections. Thou knowest the hearts of all men, nothing is hid from thee, and therefore thou knowest that I love thee. The question was three several times repeated by our blessed Saviour, and as oftentimes answered by the apostle; it being but just, that he, who by a threefold denial had given so much reason to question his affection, should now, by a threefold confession, give more than common assurance of his sincere love to his Master; and to each of these confessions our great Redeemer added this signal trial of his affection, "Feed my sheep." Instruct and teach them with the utmost care, and the utmost tenderness.

The blessed Jesus having thus engaged Peter to a cheerful compliance with the dangers that might attend the discharge of his office, particularly intimated to him the fate that would attend him; telling him, that when he was young, he girt himself, lived at his pleasure, and went wherever his fancy directed him; but when he should reach the term of old age, he should stretch forth his hands, and another should gird and bind him, and lead him whither he had no desire to go, intimating, as the Evangelist tells us, "by what death he should glorify God."

Peter was well pleased to drink the bitter cup and make his confession as public as his denial, provided all would be sufficient to atone for his former sin. And seeing John following, he asked his great Master, what should be his fate, and whether he, who had been the object of his Master's love in his life-time, should not have as honorable a death as he that had denied him? To which Jesus replied, It doth not concern thee to know how I shall dispose of events, with regard to him: he shall see the destruction of the Jewish nation, and then go down to the chambers of the dust in peace.

Not long after, our blessed Saviour appeared to his disciples at Jerusalem, to take his last farewell of them who had attended him during his public ministry among the sons of men. He led them out as far as Bethany, a small village on the Mount of Olives, where he briefly told them that they were the persons he had chosen to be the witnesses, both of his death and resurrection; a testimony which they should publish in every part of the world. In order to which he would, after his ascension into heaven, pour out his spirit upon them, in an extraordinary manner, that they might be the better enabled to struggle with that violent rage and fury, with which the doctrine of the gospel would be opposed by men and devils. Adding, that in the mean time, they should return

to Jerusalem, and there wait till those miraculous powers were given them from on high.

Having finished this discourse, he laid hands upon them, and gave them his solemn benediction; during which he was taken from them, and received up into the regions of the heavenly Canaan. The apostles, who beheld their Master visibly ascend into heaven, were filled with a greater sense of his glory than they had ever been while he conversed with them familiarly on earth. And having performed their solemn adoration to him, they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, there to wait for the accomplishment of their great Master's promise. How sudden a change was now wrought in the minds of the apostles! They who were lately overwhelmed with sorrow, at the very mention of their Lord's departure from them, beheld him now with joy and triumph; they were fully satisfied at his glorious advancement to the right hand of Omnipotence, and of that peculiar care and providence which they were sure he would exercise over them, in pursuance of those great trusts he had committed to their care.

CHAPTER VI.

Transactions of Peter, from the Ascension of his blessed Master to the dispersion of the Church at Jerusalem.

The apostles, though deprived of the personal presence of their dear Lord and Master, were indefatigable in fulfilling the commission they had received from him. The first object that engaged their attention, after their return to Jerusalem, was to fill up the vacancy in their number, lately made by the unhappy fall and apostacy of Judas. In order to this, they called together the church, and entered into "an upper room," when Peter, as president of the assembly, proposed to them the choice of a new apostle.

He put them in mind that Judas, one of the disciples of their great and beloved Master, being betrayed by his covetous and insatiable temper, had lately fallen from the honor of his place and ministry. That this was no more than what the prophet had long since foretold should come to pass, and that the care of the church which had been committed to him, should devolve upon another; that therefore it was highly necessary that some person who had been familiarly conversant with the blessed Jesus, from first to last, and consequently, a competent witness

both of his doctrine and miracles, his death, resurrection, and ascension, should be substituted in his room.

After filling up the vacancy in the apostolic number, they spent their time in prayer and meditation, till the feast of Pentecost; when the promise of their great Master in sending the Holy Ghost was fulfilled. The christian assembly were met as usual, to perform the public services of their worship, when suddenly a sound, like that of a mighty wind, rushed in upon them; representing the powerful efficacy of that divine spirit which was now to be communicated to them. After which there appeared small flames of fire, which, in the shape of cloven tongues, descended and sat upon the head of each of them, to denote that their enjoyment of this gift should be constant and perpetual; and not like the prophets of old, who were inspired only at some particular times and seasons. Upon this they were all immediately filled with the Holy Ghost, which, in an instant, enabled them to speak fluently several languages they had never learned, and probably never heard.

The report of so sudden and strange an action, was soon spread through every part of Jerusalem, which at that time was full of Jewish proselytes, "devout men of every nation under heaven, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, the dwellers in Mesopotamia and Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt, the parts of Lybia and Cyrene," from Rome, from Crete, and from Arabia. These no sooner heard of this miraculous effusion of the Holy Spirit, than they flocked in prodigious numbers to the Christian assembly, where they were amazed to hear these Galileans speaking to them in their own native languages, so various and so very different from one another. And it could not fail of exceedingly increasing the wonder, to reflect on the meanness of the speakers, who were neither assisted by genius, polished by education, or improved by use and custom. The disciples were destitute of all these assistances; their parts were mean, their education trifling, and their experience in speaking before great assemblies, trifling.—Yet now these persons spoke boldly, and with the greatest propriety, in various languages. Nor were their discourses filled with idle stories, or the follies of a luxuriant fancy. No, they expatiated on the great and admirable works of Omnipotence, and the mysteries of the Gospel, which human apprehension could never discover.

This surprising transaction had different effects on the minds of the people: some attributing it to the effect of a miracle, and others to the power and strength of "new wine." Upon which the apostles all stood up, and Peter, in the name of the rest, undertook to confute this injurious calumny.

The effect of his discourse was equally wonderful and surprising; for great numbers of those, who before ridiculed the religion of Jesus, now acknowledged him for their Saviour, and flew to him for refuge from the impending storm: and St. Luke tells us, that there were that day added to the church no less than three thousands souls, who were all baptized and received into the flock of the great Shepherd of Israel, the bishop of our souls. A quick and plentiful harvest indeed! "This was the Lord's doings, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

Soon after this wonderful conversion, Peter and John, going up to the temple about three in the afternoon, near the conclusion of one of the solemn hours of prayer, saw a poor impotent cripple, near forty years of age, who had been lame from his birth, lying at the "beautiful gate of the temple," and asking alms of those who entered the sacred edifice. This miserable object moved their compassion; and Peter, beholding him with attention, said, The riches of this world, the silver and gold so highly coveted by the sons of men, are not in my power to bestow; but I possess the power of restoring life and health, and am ready to assist thee.

Then taking the man by the hand, he commanded him, in the name of "Jesus of Nazareth, to rise up and walk." Immediately the nerves and sinews were strengthened, and the several parts of the diseased members performed their natural functions. Upon which the man accompanied them into the temple, walking, exulting, and praising God.

So strange and extraordinary a cure filled the minds of the people with admiration, and their curiosity drew them round the apostle, to view the man who had performed it. Peter, seeing the multitude gathering round them, took the opportunity of speaking to them, in the following manner: "Men and brethren, this remarkable cure should not excite your admiration of us, as if we had performed it by our own power. It was wrought in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, our crucified Master, by the power of that very Christ, that holy and just person, whom you yourselves denied, and delivered to Pilate, nay, and preferred a murderer before him, when the governor was desirous of letting him go. But though you have put him to death, yet we are witnesses that He hath raised him again from the dead, and that he is ascended into heaven, where he will remain till the great and tremendous day of general restitution.

While Peter was speaking to the people in one part of the temple, John was, in all probability, doing the same in the other; and the success plainly indicated how powerful the preaching of the Apostles was; five thousand persons embracing the doctrines

of the Gospel, and acknowledging the crucified Jesus for their Lord and Saviour.

Such amazing success could not fail of exciting the attention and envy of the rulers of Israel. Accordingly, the priests and Sadducees repaired to the Roman magistrate, and intimated to him, that, in all probability, this concourse of people would prove the cause of a tumult and insurrection. Upon this information, the captain of the people seized on the Apostles, and cast them into prison.

The next day they were carried before the Jewish Sanhedrim; and being asked by what power and authority they had done this, Peter boldly answered, "Be it known unto you, and to all the descendants of Jacob, that this miracle was wrought wholly in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye yourselves have crucified and slain, and whom the Almighty hath raised again from the dead. This is the stone which your builders refused, and which is become the head of the corner. Nor is there any other way, by which you, or any of the sons of man can be saved, but by this crucified Saviour."

The boldness of the apostle was admired by all, even by the court of the Sanhedrim. And it should be remembered, that these very judges were the persons who had so lately condemned the blessed Jesus himself, and had no other way of coloring their proceedings, than by a second act of cruelty; that the apostles did not charge them with the crime of crucifying the Son of God in secret, but in the open court of Judicature, and in the hearing of all the people.

The labors of the apostles were crowned with abundant success, and it seems that such was the aversion of the inveterate Jews to those who became converts to the faith of Christ, that they were deprived of business, in their respective callings; for we find that the professors of the religion of the holy Jesus sold their effects, and brought the money to the apostles, that they might deposit it in one common treasury, and from thence supply the several exigences of the church.

But hypocrisy was not unknown among the professors of religion even in these primitive times. Ananias, and his wife Sapphira, having embraced the doctrines of the Gospel, pretended to follow the free and generous spirit of these times by consecrating and devoting their estate to the honor of God, and the necessities of the church. Accordingly they sold their possessions, and brought part of the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet; hoping to deceive them, though guided by the spirit of Omnipotence. But Peter, at his first coming in, asked Ananias, how he could suffer Satan to fill his heart with such enormous wickedness, as to think "to deceive the Holy Ghost?" That before it was sold, it was wholly in his own

power, and afterwards the money was entirely at his own disposal; so that his action was capable of no other interpretation, than that he had not only abused and injured man, but mocked the Almighty himself, who he must know was privy to his most secret thoughts.

The apostle had no sooner finished, than Ananias, to the great terror of all that were present, fell down dead, by a stroke from heaven.

Not long after, his wife came in, whom Peter reproved in the same manner he had done her husband, adding, that she should immediately end her life in the same awful manner: upon which she was smitten by the hand of Omnipotence, and fell down dead; sharing with her husband in the punishment, as she had before in the heinous crime. This remarkable instance of severity filled all the converts with fear and trembling, and prevented in a great measure, that hypocrisy and dissimulation, by which others might flatter themselves to deceive the church.

But such instances of severity were very extraordinary: the power of the apostles was generally exerted in works of mercy and beneficence towards the sons and daughters of affliction. They cured all kinds of diseases, and cast out devils; so that they brought the sick into the streets, and laid them upon beds and couches, that the shadow at least of Peter, as he passed by, might cover some of them; well knowing a single touch or word, from either of the apostles, was sufficient to remove the most inveterate diseases.

CHAPTER VII.

Concluding Scenes of St. Peter's Life.

The Christian doctrine had been propagated hitherto without much violence or opposition, in Jerusalem, but now a storm commenced with the death of the protomartyr Stephen, nor did it end but with the dispersion of the disciples, by which means the glad tidings of the Gospel, which had till now been confined to Judea, was preached to the Gentile world, and an ancient prophecy fulfilled, which says, "Out of Sion shall go forth the law, and the word of the law from Jerusalem." Thus does the Almighty bring good out of evil, and cause the malicious intentions of the wicked to redound to his praise.

The storm, though violent, being at length blown over, the church enjoyed a time of calmness and security; during which St. Peter went to visit the churches lately planted in those parts, by the disciples whom the persecution had dispersed. And at his arrival at Lydda, he miraculously beheld Æneas, who had been afflicted with the palsy, and confined to his bed eight years; but on Peter bidding him arise in the name of Jesus, he was immediately restored to perfect health. Nor was the success of his miracles confined to Æneas and his family; the fame of it was blazed through all the neighboring country, and many believed in the doctrine of the Son of God. It was even known at Joppa, a sea-port town about six miles from Lydda, and the brethren immediately sent for Peter, on the following melancholy occasion:—Tabitha, whose Greek name was Dorcas, a woman venerable for her piety and extensive charity, was lately dead, to the great loss of mankind, who loved genuine benevolence; especially the poor and afflicted, who were supported by her charity.

At Peter's arrival, he found her dressed for funeral solemnity, and surrounded by mournful widows, who showed the coats and garments wherewith she had clothed them, the monuments of her liberality. But Peter put them all out, and kneeling down, prayed with the utmost fervency; then turning to the body, he commanded her to arise, and taking her by the hand, presented her, in perfect health to her friends and others, who were assembled to pay their last duties to so good a woman. This miracle confirmed those who had newly embraced the doctrine of Jesus, and converted many more to the faith. After which he staid a considerable time at Joppa, lodging in the house of one Simon, a tanner.

Peter, after having finished his visitation to the new planted churches, returned to Jerusalem, and was indefatigable in instructing the converts in the religion of Jesus, and preaching the glad tidings of salvation to the descendants of Jacob. But he did not long continue in this pleasing course: Herod Agrippa, in order to ingratiate himself into the favor of the Jews, put the apostle James to death, and finding the action was highly acceptable to that stiff-necked people, he resolved to extend his cruelty to Peter, and accordingly cast him into prison. But the churches were incessant in their prayers to God for his safety; and what have mortals to fear, when guarded by the hand of Omnipotence? Herod was persuaded he should soon accomplish his intention, and sacrifice Peter to the insatiable cruelty of the Jews.

But the night before this intended execution, a messenger from the court of heaven visited the gloomy horrors of the dungeon, where he found Peter asleep between his keepers. The angel

raised him up, took off his chains, and ordered him to gird on his garments, and follow him. Peter obeyed, and having passed through the first and second watch, they came to the iron gate leading to the city, which opened to them of its own accord. The angel also accompanied him through one of the streets, and then departed from him; on which Peter came to himself, and perceived that it was no vision, but that his great and beloved Master had really sent a messenger from above, and released him from prison. He therefore repaired to the house of Mary, where the church were assembled, and offering up their prayers to the throne of grace for his safety. On his knocking at the door, a maid who came to let him in, knowing his voice, ran back to tell them that Peter was at the door; which they at first considered as the effect of fancy; but the damsel continuing to affirm that it was really true, they concluded it was his angel, or some messenger sent from the court of heaven. But, on opening the door, they were convinced of their mistake, finding that it was really Peter himself, who briefly told them how he was delivered; and desiring them to inform his brethren of his being set at liberty, retired to another place.

In the morning the officers came from Herod to the prison, with orders to bring Peter out to the people, who were gathered together to behold his execution. But when they came to the prison, the keepers informed them that the apostle had made his escape; which so exasperated Herod, that he commanded those who were entrusted with the care of the prisoner, to be put to death.

As we have now related the principal transactions of this apostle, that are founded on Scripture authority, we shall have recourse to ancient historians for the residue of his life.

St. Peter had preached the Gospel in various parts of the world, enlarging the kingdom of his great Master, and spreading the glad tidings of salvation among the inhabitants of various countries: and among the rest those of Rome, then the mistress of the world. In that capital he is said to have continued several years, till the emperor Claudius, taking advantage of some seditious tumults raised by the Jews, published an edict whereby they were banished from Rome, and among the rest St. Peter, who returned to Jerusalem, and was present at the synod already mentioned. But how long he continued in the capital of Judea, is uncertain: for we have no account of his transactions for many years. This, however, is certain, that he was not idle in the service of his great Master; and Eusebius tells us, from Metaphrastus, that he visited several of the western parts, and particularly the island of Great Britain; where he continued several years, spreading the glad tidings of salvation in

these remote parts, and converting the several nations to the Christian faith.

But however this be, whether St. Peter was, or was not, in England, it is certain, that towards the latter end of Nero's reign he returned to Rome, where he found the minds of the people strangely bewildered, and hardened against the doctrines of the Gospel, by the sorceries of Simon Magus, who was chastised by Peter for his wickedness at Samaria. This monster of impiety not only opposed the preaching of the apostles, but also did all in his power to render them and their doctrine odious to the emperor.

The apostle meeting with Simon at Rome, and finding him still pretending to be some great person, even the promised Messiah, he could not help opposing zealously his presumptuous arrogancies. But Simon more incensed by the opposition, offered to give the people such an evident demonstration of his being what he pretended, that he would place the whole beyond contradiction, by immediately ascending up to heaven. Upon this, by the help of some unperceived device, he raised himself from the earth, and seemed to be moving towards the regions of heaven. St. Peter and St. Paul beholding the delusion, had recourse to prayers, and obtained their petitions to the Almighty, namely, that the impostor should be soon discovered for the honor of the blessed Jesus. Accordingly, he fell headlong to the ground; by which he was so bruised, that he died in a very short time.

Such was the end of this miserable, this unhappy man; but the news of it no sooner reached the emperor's ears, than he vowed revenge, both for the death of his favorite, and the endeavors used by the apostles to "turn mankind from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Accordingly he issued orders for apprehending St. Peter, together with his companion St. Paul. St. Ambrose tells us, that when the people perceived the danger to which St. Peter was now exposed, they prayed him to quit Rome, and repair for a while to some secure retreat, that his life might be preserved for the benefit of the church. Peter, with great reluctance, yielded to their entreaties, and made his escape by night; but as he passed the gate, he was met by a person in the form of his great and beloved Master, and on his asking him whither he was going, answered, "To Rome, to be crucified a second time;" which Peter taking for a reproof of his cowardice, returned again into the city, and was soon after apprehended, and cast, together with St. Paul, into the Mamertime prison. Here they were confined eight or nine months; but spent their time in the exercise of religion, especially in preaching to the prisoners, and those who resorted to them. And during this confinement, it is generally thought St. Peter wrote the second epistle to the dis-

persed Jews, wherein he endeavors to confirm them in the belief and practice of Christianity, and to fortify them against those poisonous and pernicious principles and actions, which even then began to break in upon the Christian church.

Nero at last returning from Achaia, entered Rome in triumph; and soon after his arrival, resolved that the apostles should fall as victims and sacrifices to his cruelties and revenge. While the fatal stroke was daily expected, the Christians in Rome were continually offering up their prayers to heaven to protect those two holy persons. But the Almighty was now willing to put an end to their sorrows; and after sealing the truth they had preached with their own blood, to receive them into the regions of eternal bliss and happiness, and exchange their crowns of martyrdom for crowns of glory. Accordingly they were both condemned by the cruel emperor of Rome: and St. Peter, having taken his farewell of the brethren, especially of St. Paul, was taken from the prison and led to the top of the Vatican mount, near the Tiber, where he was sentenced to surrender up his life on the cross.

At his coming to the place of execution, he begged the favor of the officers that he might not be crucified in the common manner, but with his head downward; affirming that he was unworthy to suffer in the same posture in which his Lord had suffered before him. This request was accordingly complied with; and the great apostle St. Peter, surrendered up his soul into the hands of his great and beneficent Master, who came down from heaven to ransom mankind from destruction, and open for them the gates of the heavenly Canaan.

His body, being taken down from the cross, is said to have been embalmed by Mercellimus, the presbyter, after the manner of the Jews, and then buried in the Vatican, near the Appian way, two miles from Rome.

ST. PAUL.

CHAPTER I.

Account of this Apostle, from his Birth till his Conversion to the Christian Faith.

This great apostle of the Gentiles, was a descendant from the ancient stock of Abraham. He belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, the youngest son of Jacob. Tarsus, the place of his nativity, was the metropolis of Cilicia, and situated about three hundred miles distant from Jerusalem; it was exceedingly rich and populous, and a Roman municipium, or free corporation, invested with the privileges of Rome, by the two first emperors, as a reward for the citizens' firm adherence to the Cæsars, in the rebellion of Crassus. St. Paul was therefore born a Roman citizen, and he often pleads this privilege on his trials.

It was common for the inhabitants of Tarsus to send their children into other cities for learning and improvement; especially to Jerusalem, where they were so numerous, that they had a synagogue of their own, called the synagogue of the Cilicians. To this capital our apostle was also sent, and brought up at the school of that eminent rabbi, Gamaliel, in the most exact knowledge of the law of Moses. Nor did he fail to profit by the instructions of that great master; for he so diligently conformed himself to precepts, that, without boasting, he asserts of himself, that touching the righteousness of the law he was blameless, and defied even his enemies to allege any thing to the contrary, even in his youth. He joined himself to the sect of the Pharisees, the most strict order of the Jewish religion, but at the same time, the proudest, and the greatest enemies to Christ and his holy religion.

With regard to his double capacity, of Jewish extraction and Roman freedom, he had two names, Saul and Paul; the former Hebrew, and the latter Latin. We must also consider his trade of tent-making as a part of his education; it being a constant practice of the Jews to bring up their children to some honest calling, that in case of necessity, they might provide for themselves by the labor of their own hands.

Saul having obtained a thorough knowledge of the sciences cultivated by the Jews, and being naturally of a very hot and fiery temper, became a great champion of the law of Moses, and the tradition of the elders, which he considered as zeal for God.

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"And suddeuly there shined round about him a light from heaven; And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"—Acts ix. 3, 4.

This rendered him impatient of all opposition to the doctrines and tenets he had imbibed, and a vehement blasphemer and persecutor of the Christians, who were commonly reputed the enemies and destroyers of the Jewish economy.

The first action we find him engaged in, was the disputation he and his countrymen had with the martyr Stephen, with regard to the Messiah. The Christian was too hard for them in the dispute: but they were too powerful for him in their civil interests: for being enraged at his convincing arguments, they carried him before the high-priest, who by false accusations condemned him to death. How far Saul was concerned in this cruel action, is impossible to say; all we know, is, that he "kept the raiment of them that slew him."

The storm of persecution against the church being thus begun, it increased prodigiously, and the poor Christians of Jerusalem were miserably harassed and dispersed. In this persecution our apostle was a principal agent, searching all the adjacent parts for the afflicted saints, beating some in the synagogue, inflicting other cruelties, confining some in prison, and procuring others to be put to death.

Nor could Jerusalem and the adjacent parts confine his fiery zeal: he applied to the Sanhedrim, and procured a commission from that court to extend his persecution to Damascus. How infernally insatiable is the fury of a misguided zeal! How restless and unwearied in its designs of cruelty! It had already sufficiently harassed the poor Christians at Jerusalem; but not content with this, it persecuted them even unto strange cities, even to Damascus itself, whither many of them had fled for shelter, resolving to bring them back to Jerusalem, in order to their punishment and execution.

But it was the will of Providence he should be employed in a work of a very different nature; and accordingly, he was stopped in his journey. For as he was travelling between Jerusalem and Damascus, to execute the commission of the Jewish Sanhedrim, a refulgent light, far exceeding the brightness of the sun, darted upon him; at which both he and his companions were terribly amazed and confounded, and immediately fell prostrate on the ground. While they lay in this state, a voice was heard, in the Hebrew language, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" To which Saul replied, "Who art thou, Lord?" And was immediately answered, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest: It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." As if the blessed Jesus had said, "All thy attempts to extirpate the faith in me will prove abortive; and like kicking against the spikes, wound and torment thyself."

Saul was sufficiently convinced of his folly in having acted against Jesus, whom he was now assured to be the true Messiah,

and asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" On which the blessed Jesus replied, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

The company which were with him heard the voice, but did not see the person who spake from heaven. In all probability they were ignorant of the Hebrew language, and therefore only heard a confused sound; for the apostle himself tells, that "they heard not the voice of him that spake;" that is, they did not understand what was spoken.

The apostle now arose from the earth, but found himself deprived of sight: the resplendent brightness of the vision being too intense for mortal eyes to behold. His companions, therefore, led him by the hand to the city of Damascus, where he entered the house of Judas, and remained there three days without sight, nor did he eat or drink, but spent his time in prayer to the Almighty, beseeching him to pardon the sins of his ignorance, and blinded zeal.

In the mean time our blessed Saviour appeared in a vision to Ananias, a very devout and religious man, highly esteemed by all the inhabitants of Damascus. "And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street, which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas, for one called Saul, of Tarsus, for behold he prayeth, and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias, coming in and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight."

Ananias, who was ever ready to obey the commands of the Most High, startled at the name, having heard of the bloody practices of Saul at Jerusalem, and what commission he was now come to execute in Damascus. He, therefore, suspected that his conversion was nothing more than a snare artfully laid by him against the Christians. But our blessed Saviour soon removed his apprehensions, by telling him that his suspicions were entirely destitute of foundation; and that he had now taken him, as a chosen vessel, to preach the Gospel both to the Jews and Gentiles, and even before the greatest monarchs of the earth. "Go thy way," said he, "for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and the kings, and the children of Israel." At the same time he acquainted him with the great persecutions he should undergo for the sake of the Gospel: "For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."

This quieted the fears of Ananias, who immediately obeyed the heavenly vision, repaired to the house of Judas, and, laying his hands upon Saul, addressed him in words to this effect:—"That Jesus," said he, "who appeared to thee in the way, hath sent me to restore thy sight, and by the infusion of his Spirit to give thee the knowledge of those truths which thou

hast blindly and ignorantly persecuted; but who is now willing to receive thee by baptism into his church, and make thee a member of his body."

This speech was no sooner pronounced, than there fell from his eyes thick films, resembling scales, and he received his sight: and after baptism, conversed with the Christians at Damascus. Nor did he only converse with them, he also, to the great astonishment of the whole church, preached the Gospel to those Christians he came with an intention to destroy, at the same time boldly asserting, "that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God;" and proving it to the Jews, with such demonstrative evidence, that they were confounded, and found it impossible to answer him.

CHAPTER II.

Continuation of the Life of St. Paul, from the time of his Conversion, till the Council was held at Jerusalem.

THE miraculous convert, at the instance of the divine command, retired into Arabia Petræa, where they received a full revelation of all the mysteries of Christianity; for he himself declares, that he conversed not with flesh and blood. Having preached in several parts of that country some time, he returned again to Damascus, applying himself, with the utmost assiduity, to the great work of the ministry, frequenting the synagogues there, powerfully confuting the objections commonly made by the descendants of Jacob against Jesus of Nazareth, and converting great numbers of Jews and Gentiles.

He was, indeed, remarkably zealous in his preaching, and blessed with a very extraordinary method of reasoning, whereby he proved the fundamental points of Christianity, beyond exception. This irritated the Jews to the highest degree; and at length, after two or three years' continuance in those parts, they found means to prevail on the governor of Damascus to have him put to death. But they knew it would be difficult to take him, as he had so many friends in the city; they therefore kept themselves in a continual watch, searched all the houses where they supposed he might conceal himself, and also obtained a guard from the governor to observe the gates, in order to prevent his escaping from them.

In this distress his Christian friends were far from deserting him: they tried every method that offered, to procure his escape,

but finding it impossible for him to pass through either of the gates of the city, they let him down from one of their houses, through a window, in a basket over the wall, by which means the cruel designs of his enemies were rendered abortive.

Having thus escaped from his malicious persecutors, he repaired to Jerusalem, and, on his arrival, addressed himself to the church. But they, knowing well the former temper and principles of this great persecutor, shunned his company, till Barnabas brought him to Peter, who was not yet cast into prison, and to James, bishop of Jerusalem, informing them of his marvellous conversion, and that he had preached the Gospel with the greatest boldness in the synagogues of Damascus; upon which they gladly received him, and familiarly entertained him fifteen days.

During this interval, he was remarkably assiduous in preaching the Gospel of the Son of God, and confuting the Hellenist Jews with the greatest courage and resolution. But snares were laid for him, as malice can as easily cease to be, as to remain inactive. Being warned by God in a vision, that his testimony would not be received at Jerusalem, he thought proper to depart, and preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. Accordingly, being conducted by his brethren to Cæsarea Philippi, he set sail for Tarsus, his native city: from whence he was soon after brought by Barnabas, to Antioch, to assist him in propagating Christianity in that city.

In this employment he spent one whole year, and had the satisfaction of seeing the gospel flourish in a very remarkable manner.

It was in this city that the disciples first acquired the name of *Christians*, before which they were styled Nazarenes; but this appellation soon prevailed all over the world; and the latter was in a few ages almost entirely forgotten.

The first place visited by Barnabas and Saul was Selucia, where they did not continue long, but sailed for Cyprus; and at Salamis, a great city in that island, they preached in the synagogue of the Jews. From thence they removed to Phaos, the residence of Sergius Paulus, the proconsul of the island, a man of great wisdom and prudence, but miserably seduced by the wicked artifices of "Bar-Jesus," a Jewish impostor, who styled himself Elymas, or the magician, vehemently opposed the apostles, and kept the proconsul from embracing the faith.

The proconsul, however, called for the apostles, who after severely checking Elymas for his malicious opposition to the truth, told him the divine vengeance was now ready to seize upon him; and immediately he was deprived of his sight. The vengeance of the Almighty was remarkably displayed in this

punishment, by depriving him of his bodily eyes, who had so wilfully and maliciously shut those of his mind against the light of the Gospel, and also endeavored to keep others in darkness and ignorance. This miracle convinced the proconsul of the truth of the doctrines taught by the apostles, and made him a convert to the faith.

St. Paul, after this remarkable success in Cyprus, repaired to Phrygia, in Pamphilia, and taking another with him, in the room of Mark, who was gone to Jerusalem, travelled to Antioch, the metropolis of Pisidia.

Soon after their arrival, they entered the synagogue of the Jews, on the sabbath day, and after the reading of the law, Paul, being invited by the rulers of the synagogue, delivered an address so powerful, that it obtained from the converted Jews a request that it should again be delivered the ensuing sabbath: when almost the whole city flocked to hear the apostle; at which the Jews were filled with envy, and contradicted Paul, uttered many blasphemous expressions against the name of Jesus of Nazareth. But their opposition could not daunt the apostles, who boldly declared, that our blessed Saviour had charged them to preach the Gospel first to the Jews, but as they so obstinately rejected it, they were now to address themselves to the Gentiles; who hearing this, rejoiced exceedingly, magnifying the works of the Almighty, and many of them embraced the doctrines of the Gospel.

This increased the malice and fury of the Jews, who by false and artful insinuation, prevailed on some of the more bigoted and honorable women to bring over their husbands to their party; by which means Paul and Barnabas were driven out of the city. At which the apostles departed, shaking off the dust from their feet as a testimony of the sense they had of the ingratitude and infidelity of the Jews.

From Antioch they went to Iconium, the metropolis of Lycaonia, a province of the lesser Asia, where they entered into the synagogue of the Jews, notwithstanding the ill-treatment they had met from the Jews in other places.

Among the converts at Lystra, was a man who had been lame from his mother's womb, and never had walked. But Paul, perceiving that he had faith to be saved, thought proper to add the cure of the body to that of the soul, knowing that it would not only be beneficial to him, but to all the rest of the believers, by confirming their faith. And that the miracle might be wrought in the most conspicuous manner, he, in the midst of the congregation, said, in an audible voice, to the man, "Stand upright on thy feet." And the words were no sooner pronounced, than his strength was at once restored, and he leaped up and walked.

The apostles indefatigably persevered in the execution of their important commission, declaring wherever they went, the glad tidings of salvation, through repentance unto life, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But the malice of the Jews still pursued them; for some of these bigoted Israelites coming from Antioch and Iconium, exasperated and stirred up the multitude; so that those very persons who could hardly be restrained from offering sacrifice to them, now used them like slaves, stoned them in so cruel a manner that Paul was thought to be dead; and as such they dragged him out of the city: but while the Christians of Lystra were attending on his body, probably in order to carry him to the grave, he arose, and returned with them into the city, and the next day departed with Barnabas to Derbe, where they preached the Gospel, and converted many; no danger being able to terrify them from the work of the ministry, and publishing the glad tidings of salvation in every place.

They did not, however, long continue at Derbe, but returned to Lystra, Iconium, Antioch, and Pisidia, confirming the Christians in those places in the faith, earnestly persuading them to persevere, and not to be discouraged with those troubles and persecutions, which they must expect would attend the profession of the Gospel. And that the affairs of the church might be conducted with more regularity, they ordained elders and pastors, to teach, to instruct, and to watch over them; and then left them to the protection of the Almighty, to whose care they recommended them by prayer and fasting.

After leaving Antioch, they passed through Pisidia, and came to Pamphilia; and after preaching the Gospel at Perga, they went down to Attalia.

Having thus finished the circuit of their ministry, they returned back to Antioch in Syria, from whence they at first departed. Here they summoned the church, and gave them an account of their ministry, the success it had met in different parts, and how great a door had thus been opened for the conversion of the Gentile world.

CHAPTER III.

Transactions of this great Apostle, from the time of the Synod at Jerusalem, till his preaching at Athens.

THE controversy concerning the observation of Jewish ceremonies in the Christian church, being decided in favor of St.

Paul, he and his companions returned back to Antioch; and soon after Peter himself came down. On reading the decretal epistle in the church, the converts conversed freely and inoffensively with the Gentiles, till some of the Jews coming thither from Jerusalem, Peter withdrew his conversation, as if it had been a thing unwarrantable and unlawful. By such a strange method of proceeding, the minds of many were dissatisfied, and their consciences very uneasy. St. Paul with the greatest concern observed it, and publicly rebuked Peter, with that sharpness and severity his unwarrantable practice deserved.

Soon after this dispute, Paul and Barnabas resolved to visit the churches they had planted among the Gentiles, and Barnabas was desirous of taking with them his cousin Mark: but this Paul strenuously opposed, as he had left them in their former journey. This trifling dispute arose to such a height, that these two great apostles and fellow-laborers in the Gopsel parted; Barnabas taking Mark with him, repaired to Cyprus, his native country, and Paul having made choice of Silas, and recommended the success of his undertaking to the care of Divine Providence, set forward on his intended journey.

They first visited the churches of Syria and Cilicia, confirming the people in the faith by their instructions and exhortations. Hence they sailed to Crete, where Paul preached the Gospel, and constituted Titus to be the first bishop and pastor of the island, leaving him to settle those affairs of the church, which time would not permit the apostle to settle himself. From hence Paul and Silas returned back to Cilicia, and came to Lystra, where they found Timothy, whose father was a Greek, but his mother a Jewish convert, and by her he had been brought up under all the advantages of a pious and religious education, especially with regard to the Holy Scriptures, which he had studied with the greatest assiduity and success. This person St. Paul designed for the companion of his travels, and a special instrument in the ministry of the Gospel. But knowing that his being uncircumcised would prove a stumbling block to the Jews, he caused him to be circumcised; being willing, in lawful and indifferent matters, to conform himself to the tempers and apprehensions of men, in order to save their souls. In this instance the apostle evinced much prudence, well knowing that inveterate prejudices in religious matters are not easily overcome: for which reason he is said to become all things to all men.

Every thing being ready for their journey, St. Paul and his companions departed from Lystra, passed through Phrygia, and the country of Galatia, where the apostle was entertained with the greatest kindness and veneration, the people looking upon him as an angel sent immediately from heaven; and being

by revelation forbidden to go into Asia, he was commanded by a second vision to repair to Macedonia, to preach the Gospel. Accordingly our Apostle prepared to pass from Asia into Europe.

Here St. Luke joined them, and became, ever after, the inseparable companion of St. Paul, who being desirous of finding the speediest passage into Macedonia, took ship with his companions, Silas, Luke and Timothy, and came to Samothracia, an island in the Ægian Sea, not far from Thrace; and the next day he went to Neapolis, a port of Macedonia. Leaving Neapolis, they repaired to Philippi, the metropolis of that part of Macedonia, and a Roman colony, where they stayed some days.

In this city, Paul, according to his constant practice, preached in a proseucha, or oratory of the Jews, which stood by the river side, at some distance from the city, and was much frequented by the devout women of their religion, who met there to pray and hear the law. And after several days, as they were repairing to the same place of devotion, there met them a damsel who possessed a spirit of divination, by whom her masters acquired very great advantage. This woman followed Paul and his companions, crying out, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation!" Paul, at first, took no notice of her, not being willing to multiply miracles without necessity. But when he saw her following them several days together, he began to be troubled, and commanded the spirit, in the name of Jesus, to come out of her. The evil spirit with reluctance obeyed, and left the damsel that very instant.

This miraculous cure proving a great loss to her masters, who acquired large gains from her soothsaying, they were filled with envy and malice against the apostles; and by their instigation, the multitude arose, and seized upon Paul and his companions, hurried them before the magistrates and governors of the colony; accusing them of introducing many innovations which were prejudicial to the state, and unlawful for them to comply with as being Romans.

The magistrates being concerned for the tranquillity of the state, and jealous of all disturbances, were very forward to punish the offenders, against whom great numbers of the multitude testified; and therefore commanded the officers to strip them, and scourge them severely.

This was accordingly executed; after which the apostles were committed to close custody, the gaoler receiving more than ordinary charge to keep them safely; and he accordingly thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. But the most obscure dungeon, or the pitchy mantle of th

night, cannot intercept the beams of divine joy and comfort from the souls of pious men. Their minds were all serenity; and at midnight they prayed and sang praises so loud, that they were heard in every part of the prison. Nor were their prayers offered to the throne of grace in vain: an earthquake shook the foundations of the prison, opened the doors, loosed the chains, and set the prisoners at liberty.

This convulsion of nature roused the gaoler from his sleep; and concluding from what he saw, that all his prisoners were escaped, he was going to put a period to his life; but Paul observing him, hastily cried, "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here." The keeper was now as greatly surprised at the goodness of the apostles, as he was before terrified at the thoughts of their escape: and calling for a light, he came immediately into the presence of the apostles, fell down at their feet, and took them from the dungeon, brought them to his own house, washed their stripes, and begged of them to instruct him in the knowledge of that God, who was so mighty to save.

St. Paul readily granted his request, and replied, That, if he believed in Jesus Christ, he might be saved with his whole house; accordingly, the gaoler, with all his family, were after a competent instruction, baptized, and received as members of the church of Christ.

As soon as it was day, the magistrates either hearing what had happened, or reflecting on what they had done as too harsh and unjustifiable, sent their sergeant to the gaoler, with orders to discharge the apostles. The gaoler joyfully delivered the message, and bid them "depart in peace;" but Paul, that he might make the magistrates sensible what injury they had done them, and how unjustly they had punished them, without examination, or trial, sent them word, that, as they thought proper to scourge and imprison Romans, contrary to the laws of the empire, he expected they should come themselves and make them some satisfaction.

The magistrates were terrified at this message; well knowing how dangerous it was to provoke the formidable power of the Romans, who never suffered any freeman to be beaten uncondemned; they came therefore to the prison, and very submissively entreated the apostles to depart without any further disturbance.

This small recompense for the cruel usage they had received was accepted by the meek followers of the blessed Jesus; they left the prison, and retired to the house of Lydia, where they comforted their brethren with an account of their deliverance and departed; having laid the foundation of a very eminent church, as it appears from St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians.

Leaving Philippi, Paul and his companions continued their journey towards the west, till they came to Thessalonica, the metropolis of Macedonia, about a hundred and twenty miles from Philippi. On his arrival at Thessalonica, Paul according to his custom, went into the synagogue of the Jews, and preached unto his countrymen. His doctrine, however, was strenuously opposed by the Jews, who would not allow Jesus to be the Messiah, because of his ignominious death.

During the stay of the apostles at Thessalonica, they lodged in the house of a certain Christian named Jason, who entertained them very courteously. But the Jews would not suffer the apostles to continue at rest. They refused to embrace the Gospel themselves, and therefore envied its success, and determined to oppose its progress. Accordingly, they gathered together a great number of lewd and wicked wretches, who beset the house of Jason, intending to take Paul, and deliver him up to an incensed multitude. But in this they were disappointed; Paul and Silas being removed from thence by the Christians, and concealed in some other part of the city, and finally sent away by night to Beræa, a city about fifty miles south of Thessalonica, but out of the power of their enemies. Here also Paul's great love for his countrymen, the Jews, and his earnest desire of their salvation, excited him to preach to them in particular; accordingly, he entered into their synagogue, and explained the Gospel unto them, proving, out of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, the truth of the doctrines he advanced. These Jews were of a more ingenuous and candid temper than those of Thessalonica; and as they heard him with great reverence and attention, expound and apply the Scriptures, so they searched diligently, whether his proofs were proper and pertinent, and consonant to the sense of the texts he referred to: and having found every thing to be agreeable to what Paul had advanced, many of them believed; and several Gentiles, following their example, became obedient to the faith, among whom were several women of quality. The news of this remarkable success was carried to Thessalonica, and greatly incensed the inveterate enemies of the Gospel there, who accordingly repaired to Beræa, and raised tumults against the apostle: so that Paul, to avoid their fury, was forced to leave the town; but Silas and Timothy, either less known or less envied, continued still there.

Paul leaving Beræa, under the conduct of certain guides, it was said to be designed to retire by sea out of Greece, that his restless enemies might cease their persecution; but the guides, according to Paul's order, brought him to Athens, and left him there after receiving from him an order for Silas and Timotheus to repair to him as soon as possible.

PAUL PREACHING AT ATHENS.

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"Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you."—Acts xvii. 22, 23.

While St. Paul continued at Athens, expecting the arrival of Silas and Timothy, he walked up and down, to take a more accurate survey of the city, which he found miserably overrun with superstition and idolatry.

Their superstitious practices grieved the spirit of the apostle; —accordingly, he exerted all his strength for their conversion; he disputed on the sabbath-days in the synagogues of the Jews, and at other times took all opportunities of preaching to the Athenians the coming of the Messiah to save the world.

This doctrine was equally new and strange to the Athenians; and though they did not persecute him as the Jews did, yet his preaching Jesus was considered by the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers as a fabulous legend, and by the more sober part as a discovery of some new gods, which they had not yet placed in their temples: and though they were not unwilling to receive any new deities, yet as the Areopagus, the supreme court of the city, was to judge of all gods, to whom public worship might be allowed, they brought him before those judges, to give an account of his doctrine.

Paul being placed before the judges of this high assembly, readily gave them an account of his doctrine, in a grave and elegant speech; wherein he did not tell them they were horrible and gross idolaters, lest they should offend them, and thereby prevent them from listening to his reasons: but, having commended them for their religious dispositions, he took occasion, from the altar inscribed to the "unknown God," to make a proper defence of his doctrine. "I endeavor," said he, "only to explain that altar to you, and manifest the nature of that God whom ye ignorantly worship. The true God is he that made the world and all things therein; and who being Lord of all, dwells not in temples made with hands, nor is to be worshipped in lifeless idols. As he is the Creator of all things, he cannot be confined to the workmanship of man, whether temples or statues; nor stand in need of sacrifices, since he is the fountain of life to all things. He made from one common original, the whole race of mankind, and hath wisely determined their dependence on him, that they might be obliged to seek after him and serve him. A truth perceivable in the darkest state of ignorance, and acknowledged by one of your own poets. If this be the nature of God, it is surely the highest absurdity to represent him by an image or similitude. The divine patience hath been too much exercised already with such gross abuses in religion, but now expects a thorough reformation, having sent his son Jesus Christ to make him known to the world, and at the same time to inform them that he hath appointed a day of general judgment, when the religion of mankind shall be tried by the test of the Gospel, before his only

begotten Son, who is appointed sole judge of the quick and dead, and whose commission to that high office hath been ratified by the Almighty, in raising him from the dead."

On his mentioning the resurrection, some of the philosophers mocked and derided him; others, more modest, but not satisfied with the proofs he had given, gravely answered, "We would hear thee again of this matter." After which Paul departed from the Court; but not without some success: for a few of his auditors believed and attended his instructions.

Thus boldly did this intrepid servant and soldier of Jesus Christ assert the cause of his divine Master, among the great, the wise, and the learned, and reason with great persuasion and eloquence on the nature of God, and the manner in which he has commanded his creatures to worship him, even in spirit and in truth.

CHAPTER IV.

Success of St. Paul's Ministry at Corinth and Ephesus.

During St. Paul's stay at Athens, Timothy, according to the order he had received, came to him, out of Macedonia, and brought an account that the Christians at Thessalonica were under persecution from their fellow-citizens, ever since his departure; at which St. Paul was greatly concerned, and at first inclined to visit them in person, to confirm them in the faith they had embraced; but being hindered by the enemies of the Gospel, he sent Timothy to comfort them, and put them in mind of what they had at first heard, namely, that persecution would be the constant attendant on their profession.

On Timothy's departure, St. Paul left Athens, and travelled to Corinth, a very populous place, and famous for its trade.

After some stay at Corinth, the apostle was joined by Silas and Timothy, and disputed frequently in the synagogue, reasoning and proving, that Jesus was the true Messiah.

During his stay at Corinth, he wrote his second Epistle to the Thessalonians, to supply his absence. In this epistle he again endeavors to confirm their minds in the truth of the Gospel, and prevent their being shaken with those troubles which the wicked and unbelieving Jews would be continually raising against them.

St. Paul, on his leaving the church at Corinth, took ship at Cenchrea, the port of Corinth, for Syria, taking with him

Aquila and Priscilla; and on his arrival at Ephesus, he preached awhile in the synagogue of the Jews, promising to return to them, after keeping the passover at Jerusalem. Accordingly, he again took ship, and landed at Cæsarea, and from thence travelled to Jerusalem, where he kept the feast, visited the church, and then repaired to Antioch. Here he staid some time, and then traversed the countries of Galatia and Phrygia, confirming the newly converted Christians, till he came to Ephesus, where he fixed his abode for three years, bringing with him Gaius of Derbe, Aristarchus, a native of Thessalonica, Timotheus and Erastus of Corinth, and Titus. The first thing he did after his arrival, was to examine certain disciples, "Whether they had received the Holy Ghost since they believed?" To which they answered, "that the doctrine they had received promised nothing of that nature, nor had they ever heard that such an extraordinary spirit had of late been bestowed upon the church."

This answer surprised the apostle, who asked them, in what name they had been baptized; since in the Christian form, the name of the Holy Ghost was always expressed? They replied that they had only received John's baptism; upon which the apostle informed them, that though John's baptism commanded nothing but repentance, yet it tacitly implied the whole doctrine of Christ and the Holy Ghost. When they heard this, they were baptized according to the form prescribed by Christ himself, that is, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and after the apostle had prayed, and layed his hands upon them, they received the gifts of tongues, and other miraculous powers.

After this, he entered into the Jewish synagogues, where, for the first three months, he contended and disputed with the Jews, endeavoring, with great earnestness and resolution, to convince them of the truth of the Christian religion. But when, instead of success, he met with nothing but obstinacy and infidelity, he left the synagogue, and taking those with him whom he had converted, instructed them and others who resorted to him, in the school of one Tyrannus, a place where scholars used to be instructed. In this manner he continued to preach the Gospel two whole years; by which means the Jews and Proselytes had an opportunity of hearing the glad tidings of salvation; and because miracles are the clearest evidence of a divine commission, the Almighty was pleased to testify the doctrine which St. Paul delivered by amazing and miraculous operations, many of which were of a peculiar and extraordinary nature; for he not only healed those that came to him, but if napkins or handkerchiefs were only touched by him, and applied to the sick, their disea-

ses immediately vanished, and the evil spirits departed out of those that were possessed by them.

About this time the apostle wrote his Epistle to the Galatians; for he had heard that, since his departure, corrupt opinions had crept in among them, with regard to the necessity of observing the legal rites.

CHAPTER V.

Transactions of St. Paul, during the farther progress of his Ministry, to the time of his arraignment before Felix.

Soon after the great tumult at Ephesus, about the goddess Diana, Paul called the Christians together, and took his leave of them with the utmost tender expressions of love and affection. He had now spent almost three years at Ephesus, and founded there a very considerable church, of which he had ordained Timothy the first bishop. He first travelled about two hundred miles northward, to Troas, before he took ship, expecting to meet Titus there. But missing him, he proceeded on his voyage to Macedonia.

On his arrival there, he preached the Gospel in several places, even as far as Illyricum, now called Sclavonia. During this journey he met with many troubles and dangers, "without were fightings, and within were fears;" but God, who comforteth those that are cast down, revived his spirits by the arrival of Titus, who gave him a pleasing account of the good effects his epistle had produced at Corinth.

During the stay of Titus in Macedonia, Paul wrote his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, and sent it to them by Titus and Luke.

About this time also he wrote his first Epistle to Timothy, whom he left at Ephesus.

During his stay in Greece, he went to Corinth, where he wrote his famous Epistle to the Romans, which he sent by Phœbe, a deaconess of the church of Cenchrea, near Corinth. His principal intention in this epistle is, fully to state and determine the great controversy between the Jews and Gentiles, with regard to the obligations of the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law, and those principal and material points of doctrine depending upon it, namely, Christian liberty, the use of indifferent things, and the like. And, which is the chief intention of all religion, instructs them, and presses them, to perform the

duties of a holy and pious life, such as the Christian doctrine naturally recommends.

St. Paul being now determined to return into Syria, in order to convey the contributions to the brethren at Jerusalem, set out on his journey; but being informed that the Jews had formed a design of killing and robbing him by the way, he returned back into Macedonia, and came to Philippi, from whence he went to Troas, where he staid seven days. Here he preached to them on the Lord's day, and continued his discourse till midnight, being himself to depart in the morning.

How indefatigable was the industry of this great apostle! How closely did he tread in the steps of his great Master, who "went about doing good!" He preached, and wrought miracles, wherever he came. As a master-builder, he either laid a foundation, or raised the superstructure. He was "instant, in season and out of season," and spared no pains to assist the souls of men.

The night being thus spent in holy exercises, St. Paul took his leave of the brethren in the morning, travelling on foot to Assos, a sea-port town, whither he had before sent his companions by sea. From thence they sailed to Mytilene, a city in the Isle of Lesbos. They next sailed from thence, and came over against Chios, and the day following landed at Trogyllium, a promontory of Ionia, near Samos. The next day they came to Miletus, not putting in at Ephesus, because the apostle was resolved, if possible, to be at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.

On his arrival at Miletus, he sent to Ephesus, to summon the elders of the church; and, on their coming, reminded them of the manner in which he had conversed among them, how faithfully and affectionately he had discharged the offices of his ministry, and how incessantly he had labored for the good of the souls of men: adding, that he had never failed to acquaint them, both in public and private, with whatever might be useful and profitable to them; urging both the Jews and Gentiles to repentance, and reformation of life, and a hearty perseverance in the faith of Christ: that he was now going up to Jerusalem, where he was ignorant of what might befall him, except what had been foretold him by those who were endued with the prophetical gifts of the Holy Ghost: namely, that afflictions and imprisonment would attend him; but that this gave him no concern, being willing to lay down his life whenever the Gospel required it, and fully determined to serve faithfully his great Lord and Master.

St. Paul having finished his discourse, he kneeled down, and joined with them in prayer; and they all melted into tears, and, with the greatest expressions of sorrow, attended him to the

ship; grieving in the most passionate manner for what he had told them, "That they should see his face no more."

Paul, with his companions, now departed from Miletus, and arrived at Coos, from whence they sailed the next day to Rhodes, a large island in the Ægean sea. Leaving this place, they came to Patara, the metropolis of Lycia, where they went on board another vessel bound for Tyre, in Phœnica. On his arrival, he visited the brethren there, and continued with them a week, and was advised by some of them, who had the gift of prophecy, not to go up to Jerusalem. But the apostle would by no means abandon his design, or refuse to suffer any thing, provided he might spread the Gospel of his Saviour. Finding all persuasions were in vain, they jointly accompanied him to the shore, where he kneeled down, and prayed with them; and after embracing them with the utmost affection, he went on board, and came to Ptolemais, and the next day to Cæsarea.

During their stay in this place, Agabus, a Christian prophet, came thither from Judea, who, taking Paul's girdle, bound his own hands and feet with it, signifying by this symbol, that the Jews would bind Paul in that manner, and deliver him over to the Gentiles. Whereupon both his own companions and the Christians of Cæsarea earnestly besought him that he would not go up to Jerusalem. But the apostle asked them, if they intended by these passionate dissuasives to add more affliction to his sorrow. "For I am ready," continued he, "not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus."

When the disciples found that his resolution was not to be shaken, they importuned him no further, leaving the event to be determined according to the pleasure of the Most High. And all things being ready, Paul and his companions set forward on their journey, and were kindly and joyfully received by the Christians on their arrival at Jerusalem.

CHAPTER VI.

The transactions of St. Paul, from his first Trial before Felix till his coming to Rome.

Our apostle, soon after his arrival, encountered Tertullus, who, in a short, but eloquent speech, began to accuse him, charging him with sedition, heresy, and the profanation of the temple.

The orator having finished his charge against the apostle, Felix told St. Paul that he was now at liberty to make his defence, which he did in the following manner:

"I answer this charge of the Jews with the greatest satisfaction before thee, because thou hast for many years been a judge of this nation. About twelve days since, I repaired to Jerusalem to worship the God of Jacob. But I neither disputed with any man, or endeavored to stir up the people in the synagogues or the city. Nor can they prove the charge they have brought against me.

"This, however, I readily confess, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, and according to this faith, I am careful to maintain a clear and quiet conscience, both towards God and man.

"After I had spent some years in distant countries, I repaired to Jerusalem, with the alms I had collected in other provinces, for the poor of mine own nation, an offering to the God of Jacob. And while I was performing the duties of religion, certain Asiatic Jews found me in the temple purified according to the law; but neither attended with a multitude of followers, or the least tumultuous assembly. It was therefore necessary that these Jews should have been here, if they had any thing to allege against me. Nay, I appeal to those of the Sanhedrim here present, if any thing has been laid to my charge, except the objections of the Sadducees, who violently opposed me for asserting the doctrine of the resurrection."

Felix having thus heard both parties, refused to pass any final sentence, till he had more fully advised about it, and consulted Lysias, the governor of the castle, who was the most proper person to give an account of the sedition and tumult; commanding, in the mean time, that St. Paul should be kept under a guard, but at the same time enjoy the liberty of being visited by his friends, and receiving from them any office of friendship.

Some time after St. Paul had appealed unto Cæsar, king Agrippa, who succeeded Herod in the Tetrarchate of Galilee, and his sister Bernice, came to Cæsarea to visit the new governor. Festus embraced this opportunity of mentioning the case of our apostle to king Agrippa, together with the remarkable tumult this affair had occasioned among the Jews, and the appeal he had made to Cæsar. This account excited the curiosity of king Agrippa, and he was desirous of hearing himself what St. Paul had to say in his own vindication.

Accordingly, the next day, the king and his sister, accompanied with Festus the governor, and several other persons of distinction, came into the court with a pompous and splendid retinue, where the prisoner was brought before them. On his

appearing, Festus informed the court, how greatly he had been importuned by the Jews, both at Cæsarea and Jerusalem, to put the prisoner to death as a malefactor; but having, on examination, found him guilty of no capital crime, and the prisoner himself having appealed unto Cæsar, was determined to send him to Rome; but was willing to have his case debated before Agrippa, that he might be furnished with some material particulars to send with him; it being highly absurd to send a prisoner without signifying the crimes alleged against him.

Festus having finished his speech, Agrippa told Paul, he was now at liberty to make his own defence: and silence being made, he delivered himself in the following manner, addressing his speech particularly to Agrippa:

"I consider it as a peculiar happiness, king Agrippa, that I am to make my defence against the accusations of the Jews before thee: because thou art well acquainted with all their customs, and the questions commonly debated among them: I therefore beseech thee to hear me patiently. All the Jews are well acquainted with my manner of life, from my youth, the greatest part of it having been spent with my own countrymen at Jerusalem. They also know that I was educated under the institutions of the Pharisees, the strictest sect of our religion, and am now arraigned for a tenet believed by all their fathers; a tenet sufficiently credible in itself, and plainly revealed in the Scriptures, I mean, the resurrection of the dead. Why should any mortal think it either incredible or impossible that God should raise the dead?

"I, indeed, formerly thought myself indispensably obliged to oppose the religion of Jesus of Nazareth. Nor was I satisfied with imprisoning and punishing with death itself the saints I found at Jerusalem; I even persecuted them in strange cities, whither my implacable zeal pursued them, having procured authority for that purpose from the chief priests and elders.

"Accordingly, I departed for Damascus, with a commission from the Sanhedrim: but as I was travelling towards that city, I saw at mid-day, O king, a light from heaven, far exceeding the brightness of the sun, encompassing me and my companions. On seeing this awful appearance, we all fell to the earth, and I heard a voice which said to me, in the Hebrew language, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." To which I answered, 'Who art thou, Lord?' and he replied, 'I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest.' But be not terrified, arise from the earth: for I have appeared unto thee, that thou mightest be both a witness of the things thou hast seen, and also of others, which I will hereafter reveal unto thee. My power shall deliver thee from the Jews and Gentiles, to whom now I send thee to preach the Gospel; to

withdraw the veil of darkness and ignorance; to turn them from falsehood unto truth, 'and from the power of Satan unto God.'

"Accordingly, king Agrippa, I readily obeyed the heavenly vision; I preached the Gospel first to the inhabitants of Damascus, then to those of Jerusalem and Judea, and afterwards to the Gentiles, persuading them to forsake their iniquities, and, by sincere repentance turn to the living God.

"These endeavors to save the souls of sinful mortals exasperated the Jews, who caught me in the temple, and entered into a conspiracy to destroy me. But, by the help of Omnipotence, I still remain a witness to all the human race, preaching nothing but what Moses and all the prophets foretold, namely, That the Messiah should suffer, be the first that should rise from the chambers of the grave, and publish the glad tidings of salvation, both to the Jews and Gentiles."

While the apostle thus pleaded for himself, Festus cried out, "Paul, thou art mad; too much study hath deprived thee of thy reason." But Paul answered, "I am far, most noble Festus, from being transported with idle and distracted ideas; the words I speak are dictated by truth and sobriety; and I am persuaded that the king Agrippa himself is not ignorant of these things: for they were transacted openly before the world. I am confident, king Agrippa, that thou believest the prophets, and therefore must know that all their predictions were fulfilled in Christ." To which Aprippa answered, "Thou hast almost persuaded me to embrace the Christian faith." Paul replied, "I sincerely wish that not only thou, but also all that hear me, were not almost, but altogether, the same as I myself, except being prisoners."

It being now finally determined, that Paul should be sent to Rome, he was, with several other prisoners of consequence committed to the care of Julius, commander of a company belonging to the legion of Augustus; and was accompanied in his voyage by St. Luke, Aristarchus, Trophimus, and some others not mentioned by the sacred historian.

In the month of September, they embarked on board a ship of Adramyttium, and sailed to Sidon, where the centurion courteously gave the apostle leave to go on shore to visit his friends and refresh himself.

After a short stay they sailed for Cyprus, and arrived opposite the Fair Havens, a place near Myra, a city of Lycia. Here the season being far advanced, and Paul foreseeing it would be a dangerous voyage, persuaded them to put in and winter there. But the Roman centurion preferring the opinion of the master of the ship, and the harbor being at the same time incommodious, resolved, if possible to reach Phœnice, a port

of Crete, and winter there. But they soon found themselves disappointed; for the fine southerly gale which had favored them for some time, suddenly changed into a stormy and tempestuous wind at north-east, which blew with such violence, that the ship was obliged to sail before it; and to prevent her sinking, they threw overboard the principal part of her lading.

In this desperate and uncomfortable condition they continued fourteen days, and on the fourteenth night the mariners discovered they were near some coast, and therefore, to avoid the rocks, thought proper to come to an anchor, till the morning might give them better information.

During the time they continued at anchor, waiting for the light of the morning, St. Paul prevailed on them to eat and refresh themselves, having fasted a long time, assuring them they should all escape.

The conntry near which they were, was, as Paul had foretold, an island called Melita, now Malta, situated in the Lybian Sea, between Syracuse and Africa. Here they landed, and met with great civility from the people, who treated them with humanity, and entertained them with every necessary accommodation. But while St. Paul was laying a few sticks on the fire, a viper, enlivened by the heat, came from among the wood, and fastened on his hand. On seeing this, the inhabitants of the island concluded that he was certainly some notorious murderer, whom the divine vengeance, though it suffered him to escape the sea, had reserved for a more public and solemn execution. But when they saw him shake off the venomous creature into the fire, and no manner of harm ensue, they changed their sentiments, and cried out, "that he was a god."

After three months' stay in this island, the centurion with his charge went on board the Castor and Pollux, a ship of Alexandria, bound to Italy. They put in at Syracuse, where they tarried three days; then they sailed to Regium, and from thence to Puteoli, where they landed; and finding some Christians there, staid, at their request, a week with them, and then set forward on their journey to Rome. The Christians of this city, hearing of the apostle's coming, went to meet him as far as the distance of about thirty miles from Rome, and others as far as the Appiiforum, fifty-one miles distant from the capital. They kindly embraced each other, and the liberty he saw the Christians enjoy at Rome greatly tended to enliven the spirits of the apostle.

PAUL SHIPWRECKED AT MELITA.

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"And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm."—Acts xxviii. 4, 5.

CHAPTER VII.

The transactions of St. Paul, from his arrival at Rome, till his Martyrdom.

HAVING refreshed himself after the fatigue of his voyage, the apostle sent for the heads of the Jewish consistory at Rome, and related to them the cause of his coming, in the following manner: "Though I have been guilty of no violence of the laws of our religion, yet I was delivered by the Jews at Jerusalem to the Roman governors, who more than once would have acquitted me as innocent of any capital offence: but, by the perverseness of my persecutors, I was obliged to appeal unto Cæsar; not that I had any thing to accuse my nation of; I had recourse to this method merely to clear my own innocence."

Having thus removed a popular prejudice, he added, "That the true cause of his sufferings was what their own religion had taught him, 'the belief and expectation of a future resurrection.'" But his discourse had different effects on different hearers, some being convinced, and others persisting in their infidelity.

For two whole years Paul dwelt at Rome, in a house he had hired for his own use; wherein he assiduously employed himself in preaching and writing for the good of the church.

The Christians of Philippi hearing of St. Paul's being at Rome, and not knowing what distress he might be reduced to, raised a contribution for him, and sent it to Epaphroditus, their bishop, by whom he returned an epistle to them, wherein he gives some account of the state of his affairs at Rome.

St. Paul lived about three years at Ephesus, preaching the Gospel to the numerous inhabitants of that city, and was therefore well acquainted with the state and condition of the place; so that taking the opportunity of Tychicus' going thither, he wrote his epistles to the Ephesians, wherein he endeavors to countermine the principles and practices both of the Jews and Gentiles, to confirm them in the belief and practices of the Christian doctrine, and to instruct them fully in the great mysteries of the Gospel.

By what means St. Paul was discharged from the accusation the Jews brought against him we have no account in history; but it is natural to suppose, that not having sufficient proof of what they alleged, or being informed that the crimes they accused him of, were no violation of the Roman laws, they durst not implead him before the emperor, and so permitted him to be dis-

charged of course. But by whatever means he procured his liberty, he wrote his epistle to the Hebrews before he left Italy, from whence he dates his salutations.

The principal design of it is to magnify Christ, and the religion of the Gospel, above Moses and the Jewish economy, in order to establish and confirm the converted Jews in the firm belief and profession of Christianity, notwithstanding the trouble and persecutions that would certainly attend them.

Having thus discharged his ministry, both by preaching and writing, in Italy, St. Paul, accompanied by Timothy, prosecuted his long intended journey into Spain: and, according to the testimony of several writers, crossed the sea, and preached the Gospel in Britain.

What success he had in these western parts is not known: he however, continued there eight or nine months, and then returned again to the east, visited Sicily, Greece, and Crete, and then repaired to Rome.

Here he met with Peter, and was, together with him, thrown into prison, doubtless in the general persecution raised against the Christians, under pretence that they had set fire to the city. How long he remained in prison is uncertain; nor do we know whether he was scourged before his execution. He was, however, allowed the privilege of a Roman citizen, and therefore beheaded.

Being come to the place of execution, which was the Aquæ Salvæ, three miles from Rome, he cheerfully, after a solemn preparation, gave his neck to the fatal stroke; and from this vale of misery passed to the blissful regions of immortality, to the kingdom of his beloved Master, the great Redeemer of the human race.

He was buried in the Via Ostiensis, about two miles from Rome; and about the year 317, Constantine the Great, at the instance of Pope Sylvester, built a stately church over his grave, adorned it with an hundred marble columns, and beautified it with the most exquisite workmanship.

ST. ANDREW.

CHAPTER I.

The transactions of St. Andrew, from his Birth to his being called to the Apostleship.

This apostle was born at Bethsaida, a city of Galilee, built on the banks of the Lake of Genessareth, and was son to John, or Jonas, a fisherman of that town. He was brother to Simon Peter, but whether older or younger is not certainly known, though the generality of the ancients intimate that he was the younger. He was brought up to his father's trade, at which he labored till our blessed Saviour called him to be a fisher of men, for which he was, by some preparatory instructions, qualified even before the appearance of the Messiah.

John the Baptist had lately preached the doctrine of repentance, and was, by the generality of the Jews, from the impartiality of his precepts, and the remarkable strictness and austerity of his life, held in great veneration.

In the number of his followers was our apostle, who accompanied him beyond Jordan, when the Messiah, who had some time before been baptized, came that way. Upon his approach, the Baptist pointed him out as the Messiah, styling him the Lamb of God, the true sacrifice that was to expiate the sins of the world. As soon as the Baptist had given this character of Jesus, Andrew, and another disciple, probably St. John, followed the Saviour of mankind to the place of his abode.

After some conversation with him, Andrew departed, and having found his brother Simon, informed him that he had discovered the great Messiah, so long expected by the house of Jacob, and accordingly brought him to Jesus. They did not, however, stay long with their Master, but returned to their calling.

Something more than a year after, Jesus, passing through Galilee, found Andrew and Peter fishing on the sea of Galilee, where he fully satisfied them of the greatness and divinity of his person, by a miraculous draught of fishes, which they took at his command. He now told them that they should enter on a different series of labors, and instead of fish, should, by the efficacy and influence of their doctrine upon the heart and conscience, catch men; commanding them to follow him, as his immediate disciples and attendants; and accordingly they left all and followed him.

CHAPTER II.

The transactions of St. Andrew, from our blessed Saviour's Ascension, till his Martyrdom.

AFTER the ascension of the blessed Jesus into heaven, and the descent of the Holy Ghost on the apostles, to qualify them for their great undertaking, St. Andrew, according to the generality of ancient writers, was chosen to preach the Gospel in Scythia, and the neighboring countries.

Accordingly he departed from Jerusalem, and first travelled through Cappadocia, Galatia, and Bythinia, instructing the inhabitants in the faith of Christ, and continued his journey along the Euxine Sea, into the desert of Scythia. An ancient author tells us, that he first came to Amynsus, where, being entertained by a Jew, he went into the synagogue, preached to them concerning Jesus, and from the prophecies of the Old Testament proved him to be the Messiah, and Saviour of the world. Having converted many here, he settled the times of their public meetings, and ordained them priests.

He went next to Trapezium, a maritime city on the Euxine Sea; from whence, after visiting many other places, he came to Nice, where he stayed two years, preaching and working miracles with great success. After leaving Nice, he passed to Nicodemia, and from thence to Chalcedon, whence he sailed through the Prepontis, came to the Euxine Sea to Heraclea, and afterwards to Amastris. In all these places he met with the greatest difficulties, but overcame them by an invincible patience and resolution.

He next came to Synope, a city situated on the same sea, and famous both for the birth and burial of king Mithridates; here he met with his brother Peter, and stayed with him a considerable time. The inhabitants of Synope were mostly Jews, who partly from a zeal for their religion and partly from their barbarous manners, were exasperated against St. Andrew, and entered into a confederacy to burn the house in which he lodged. But being disappointed in their design, they treated him with the most savage cruelty, throwing him on the ground, stamping upon him with their feet, pulling and dragging him from place to place; some beating him with clubs, some pelting him with stones, and others to satisfy their brutal revenge, biting off his flesh with their teeth; till apprehending they had entirely deprived him of life, they cast him out into the fields. But he miraculously recovered, and returned publicly into the city; by which

and other miracles he wrought among them, he converted many from the error of their ways, and induced them to become disciples of the blessed Jesus.

Departing from Synope, he returned to Jerusalem; but he did not continue long in that neighborhood. He returned again to the province allotted him for the exercise of his ministry, which greatly flourished through the power of the divine grace that attended it.

He travelled over Thrace, Macedonia, Thessaly, Achaia, and Epirus, preaching the Gospel, propagating Christianity, and then confirming the doctrine he taught with signs and miracles. At last he came to Petrea, a city of Achaia, where he gave his last and greatest testimony to the Gospel of his divine Master, sealing it with his blood.

Ægenas, proconsul of Achaia, came at this time to Petrea, where, observing that multitudes had abandoned the heathen religion, and embraced the Gospel of Christ, he had recourse to every method, both of favor and cruelty, to reduce the people to their old idolatry. The apostle, whom no difficulties or dangers could deter from performing the duties of his ministry, addressed himself to the proconsul, calmly putting him in mind that, being only a judge of men, he ought to revere him who was the supreme and impartial judge of all, pay him the divine honors due to his exalted majesty, and abandon the impieties of his idolatrous worship; observed to him, that if he would renounce his idolatries, and heartily embrace the Christian faith, he should, with him and the numbers who had believed in the Son of God, receive eternal happiness in the Messiah's kingdom. The proconsul answered, that he himself should never embrace the religion he mentioned: and that the only reason why he was so earnest with him to sacrifice to the gods was, that those whom he had every where seduced might, by his example, be brought back to the ancient religion they had forsaken. The apostle replied, that he saw it was in vain to endeavor to persuade a person incapable of sober counsels, and hardened in his own blindness and folly; that with regard to himself, he might act as he pleased, and if he had any torment greater than another, he might heap that upon him; as the greatest constancy he showed in his sufferings for Christ, the more acceptable he should be to his Lord and Master. Ægenas could hold no longer; and after treating him with very opprobrious language, and showing him the most distinguished marks of contempt, he passed sentence on him, that he should be put to death.

He first ordered the apostle to be scourged, and seven lictors successively whipped his naked body; but seeing his invincible

patience and constancy, he commanded him to be crucified; but to be fastened to the cross with cords instead of nails, that his death might be more lingering and tedious.

As he was led to the place of execution walking with a cheerful and composed mind, the people cried out, that a good and innocent man was unjustly condemned to die. On his coming near the cross, he saluted it in the following manner: "I have long desired and expected this happy hour. The cross has been consecrated by the body of Christ hanging on it, and adorned with his members as with so many inestimable jewels. I therefore come joyfully and triumphing to it, that it may receive me as a disciple and follower of him, who once hung upon it, and be the means of carrying me safe to my Master, being the instrument on which he redeemed me."

After offering up his prayers to the throne of grace, and exhorting the people to constancy and perseverance in the faith he had delivered to them, he was fastened to the cross, on which he hung two whole days, teaching and instructing the people in the best manner his wretched situation would admit, being sometimes so weak and faint as scarce to have the power of utterance.

In the mean time great interest was made to the proconsul to spare his life: but the apostle earnestly begged of the Almighty that he might now depart, and seal the truth of his religion with his blood. His prayers were heard, and he expired on the last day of November, but in what year is uncertain.

There seems to have been something peculiar in the form of the cross on which he suffered. It was commonly thought to have been a cross decussate, or two pieces of timber crossing each other in the centre, in the form of the letter X, and hence usually known by the name of St. Andrew's cross.

His body being taken down from the cross, was decently and honorably interred by Maximillia, a lady of great quality and estate, and whom Nicephorus tells us, was wife to the proconsul.

Constantine the Great afterwards removed his body to Constantinople, and buried it in the great church he had built to the honor of the apostles; but this structure being taken down some hundred years after, in order to rebuild it, by Justinian the emperor, the body of St. Andrew was found in a wooden coffin, and again deposited in its proper place.

ST. JAMES THE GREAT.

CHAPTER I.

The transactions of St. James the Great, from his Birth, to the Ascension of the Son of God.

THIS apostle (who was surnamed the Great, by way of distinction, from another of that name) was the son of Zebedee, and by trade a fisherman, to which he applied himself with remarkable assiduity, and was exercising his employment, when the Saviour of the world passing by the sea of Galilee, saw him with his brother in the ship, and called them both to be his disciples. Nor was the call in vain: they cheerfully complied with it, and immediately left all to follow him; readily delivering themselves up to perform whatever service he should appoint them.

Soon after this he was called from the station of an ordinary disciple to the apostolic office, and even honored with some particular favors beyond most of the apostles, being one of the three whom our Lord made choice of as his companions in the more intimate transactions of his life, from which the rest were excluded. Thus, with Peter, and his brother John, he attended his Master when he raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead; he was admitted to Christ's glorious transfiguration on the mount: and when the holy Jesus was to undergo the bitter agonies in the garden, as preparatory sufferings to his passion, James was one of the three taken to be a spectator of them. Nor was it the least instance of that particular honor our Lord conferred on these apostles, that at his calling them to the apostleship, he gave them a new name and title. Simon he called Peter, or a rock; and James and John, who were brothers, Boanerges, or the sons of thunder.

Some think that this name was given them on account of their loud and bold preaching of the Gospel to the world, fearing no threatenings, despising all opposition, and going on thundering in the ears of a drowsy and sleepy world; rousing and awakening the consciences of men with the earnestness and vehemence of their preaching, which resembled thunder, as the voice of God powerfully shakes the natural world, and breaks in pieces the cedar of Lebanon. Others think it relates to the doctrine they delivered, teaching the great mysteries and promulga-

ting the Gospel in a more profound and lofty strain than the rest.

But however this be, our blessed Saviour, doubtless, alluded by this term to the furious and resolute disposition of these two brothers, who seem to have been of a more fiery temper than the rest of the apostles, of which we have this memorable instance. When our Lord was determined on his journey to Jerusalem, he sent some of his disciples before him to make preparations for his coming; but, on their entering a village of Samaria, they were rudely rejected, from the old grudge that subsisted between the Samaritans and Jews, and because the Saviour, by going up to Jerusalem, seemed to slight their place of worship on Mount Gerizim. This piece of rudeness and inhumanity was so highly resented by St. James and his brother, that they came to Jesus, desiring to know if he would not imitate Elias, by calling fire down from heaven to consume this barbarous inhospitable people? Thus we find the best of men are but men, and that corrupt nature will sometimes appear even in renewed minds. But the holy Jesus soon convinced them of their mistake, by telling them, that instead of destroying, he was come to save the lives of the children of men.

CHAPTER II.

The transactions of St. James, from the Messiah's Ascension, to his sealing the truth of the Gospel with his blood.

SOPHRONIUS tells us, that after the ascension of the blessed Jesus, this apostle preached to the dispersed Jews; that is, to those converts who dispersed after the death of Stephen. The Spanish writers will have it, that after preaching the Gospel in several parts of Judea and Samaria, he visited Spain, where he planted Christianity, and appointed some select disciples to perfect what he had begun; but if we consider the shortness of St. James' life, and that the apostles continued in a body at Jerusalem, even after the dispersion of the other Christians, we shall find it difficult to allow time sufficient for so tedious and difficult a voyage as that was in those early ages; and therefore it is safest to confine his ministry to Judea and the adjacent countries.

Herod, who was a bigot to the Jewish religion, as well as desirous of acquiring the favor of the Jews, began a violent perse-

cution of the Christians, and his zeal animated him to pass sentence of death on St. James immediately. As he was led to the place of execution, the officer that guarded him to the tribunal, or rather his accuser, having been converted by that remarkable courage and constancy shown by the apostle at the time of his trial, repented of what he had done, came and fell down at the apostle's feet, and heartily begged pardon for what he had said against him. The holy man, after recovering from the surprise, tenderly embraced him. "Peace," said he, "my son, peace be unto thee, and pardon of thy faults." Upon which the officer publicly declared himself a Christian, and both were beheaded at the same time. Thus fell the great apostle St. James, taking cheerfully that cup of which he had long since told his Lord, he was ready to drink.

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

CHAPTER I.

The transactions of St. John, from his Birth to the Ascension of his great Lord and Master.

From the very minute and circumstantial account this Evangelist gives of John the Baptist, he is supposed to have been one of his followers, and is thought to be that other disciple who, in the first chapter of his Gospel, is said to have been present with Andrew, when John declared Jesus to be "the Lamb of God," and thereupon to have followed him to the place of his abode.

He was by much the youngest of the apostles, yet he was admitted into as great a share of his Master's confidence as any of them. He was one of those to whom he communicated the most private transactions of his life; one of those whom he took with him when he raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead; one of those to whom he displayed a specimen of his divinity, in his transfiguration on the mount: one of those who were present at his conference with Moses and Elias, and heard that voice which declared him "the beloved Son of God;" and one of those who were companions in his solitude, most retired devotions, and bitter agonies in the garden.

These instances of particular favor, our apostle endeavored, in some measure, to answer by returns of particular kindness and constancy. For though he at first deserted his Master on his apprehension, yet he soon recovered himself, and came back to see his Saviour, confidently entered the high priest's hall, followed our Lord through the several particulars of his trial, and at last waited on him at his execution, owning him, as well as being owned by him, in the midst of armed soldiers, and in the thickest crowds of his most inveterate enemies. Here it was that our great Redeemer committed to his care his sorrowful and disconsolate mother, with his dying breath. And certainly the holy Jesus could not have given a more honorable testimony of his particular respect and kindness to St. John, than by leaving his own mother to his trust and care, and substituting him to supply that duty himself paid her while he resided in this vale of sorrow.

CHAPTER II.

The transactions of St. John, from the Ascension of Christ to his Death.

After the ascension of the Saviour of the world, when the apostles made a division of the provinces among themselves, that of Asia fell to the share of St. John, though he did not immediately enter upon his charge, but continued at Jerusalem till the death of the blessed Virgin, which might be about fifteen years after our Lord's ascension. Being released from the trust committed to his care by his dying Master, he retired into Asia, and industriously applied himself to the propagation of Christianity, preaching where the Gospel had not yet been known, and confirming it where it was already planted. Many churches of note and eminence were of his foundation, particularly those of Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, and others; but his chief place of residence was at Ephesus, where St. Paul had many years before founded a church, and constituted Timothy bishop of it.

After spending several years at Ephesus, he was accused to Domitian, who had begun a persecution against the Christians, as an eminent assertor of atheism and impiety, and a public subverter of the religion of the empire; so that by his command the proconsul sent him bound to Rome, where he met with the treatment that might have been expected from so barbarous a

prince, being thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil. But the Almighty, who reserved him for further service in the vineyard of his Son, restrained the heat, as he did in the fiery furnace of old, and delivered him from this seemingly unavoidable destruction. And surely one would have thought that so miraculous a deliverance should have been sufficient to have persuaded any rational man, that the religion he taught was from God, and that he was protected from danger by the hand of Omnipotence. But miracles themselves were not sufficient to convince this cruel emperor, or abate his fury. He ordered St. John to be transported to an almost desolate island in the Archipelago, called Patmos, where he continued several years, instructing the poor inhabitants in the knowledge of the Christian faith; and here, about the end of Domitian's reign, he wrote his book of Revelations, exhibiting by visions and prophetical representations, the state and condition of Christianity in the future periods and ages of the church.

Upon the death of Domitian, and the succession of Narva, who repealed all the odious acts of his predecessor, and by public edicts recalled those whom the fury of Domitian had banished, St. John returned to Asia, and fixed his seat again at Ephesus; the rather because the people of that city had lately martyred Timothy the bishop. Here, with the assistance of seven other bishops, he took upon himself the government of the large diocese of Asia Minor, and disposed of the clergy in the best manner that the circumstances of those times would permit, spending his time in an indefatigable execution of his charge, travelling from east to west, to instruct the world in the principles of the holy religion he was sent to propagate.

In this manner, St. John continued to labor in the vineyard of his great Master, until death put a period to all his toils and sufferings; which happened in the beginning of Trajan's reign, in the ninety-eighth year of his age; and, according to Eusebius, his remains were buried near Ephesus.

St. John seems always to have led a single life; though some of the ancients tell us he was a married man. He was polished by no study or arts of learning: but what was wanting from human art, was abundantly supplied by the excellent constitution of his mind, and that fulness of divine grace with which he was adorned. His humility was admirable, studiously concealing his own honor. For in his epistles he never styles himself either apostle or evangelist: the title of presbyter, or elder, is all he assumes, and probably in regard to his age as much as his office. In his Gospel, when he speaks of "the disciple whom Jesus loved," he constantly conceals his own name, leaving the reader to discover whom he meant.

The greatest instance of our apostle's care for the souls of men is in the writings he left to posterity; the first of which in time, though placed last in the sacred canon, is his Apocalypse or Book of Revelations, which he wrote during his banishment at Patmos.

Next to the Apocalypse, in order of time, are his three epistles; the first of which is catholic, calculated for all times and places, containing the most excellent rules for the conduct of a Christian life, persuading to holiness and pureness of manners, and not to be satisfied with a naked and empty profession of religion; not to be led away by the crafty insinuation of seducers, and cautioning men against the poisonous principles and practices of the Gnostics. The apostle here, according to his usual modesty, conceals his name; it being of more consequence to a wise man what is said, than he who says it. It appears from St. Augustine, that this epistle was anciently inscribed to the Parthians, because, in all probability, St. John preached the Gospel in Parthia. The other two epistles are but short, and directed to particular persons; the one to a lady of great quality, the other to the charitable and hospitable Gaius, the kindest friend and most courteous entertainer of all indigent Christians.

Before he undertook the task of writing the Gospel, he caused a general fast to be kept by all the Asiatic churches, to implore the blessing of heaven on so great and momentous an undertaking. When this was done, he set about the work, and completed it in so excellent and sublime a manner, that the ancients generally compared him to an eagle soaring aloft among the clouds, whither the weak eye of man was not able to follow him. "Among all the evangelical writers (says St. Basil) none are like St. John, the son of thunder, for the sublimity of his speech, and the height of his discourses, which are beyond any man's capacity fully to reach and comprehend." "St. John as a true son of thunder, (says Epiphanus,) by a loftiness of speech peculiar to himself, acquaints us, as it were, out of the clouds and dark recesses of wisdom, with the divine doctrine of the Son of God."

Such is the character given of the writings of this great apostle and evangelist, who was honored with the endearing title of being the beloved disciple of the Son of God; a writer so profound as to deserve, by way of eminence, the character of "St. John the Divine."

ST. PHILIP.

CHAPTER I.

The transactions of St. Philip, from his Birth to his being called to the Apostleship.

THIS apostle was a native of Bethsaida, "the city of Andrew and Peter." He had the honor of being first called to be a disciple of the great Messiah, which happened in the following manner: Our blessed Saviour, soon after his return from the wilderness, where he had been tempted by the devil, met with Andrew, and his brother Peter, and after some discourse parted from them. The next day, as he was passing through Galilee, he found Philip, whom he presently commanded to follow him, the constant form he made use of in calling his disciples, and those that inseparably attended him. So that the prerogative of being first called, evidently belongs to St. Philip, he being the first of our Lord's disciples; for though Andrew and St. John were the first that came and conversed with the Saviour of the world, yet they immediately returned to their occupation, and were not called till a whole year after.

It cannot be doubted, that notwithstanding St. Philip was a native of Galilee, yet he was excellently skilled in the law and the prophets. Metaphrastes assures us, that he had, from his childhood, been excellently educated; that he frequently read over the books of Moses, and attentively considered the prophecies relating to the Messiah.

Nor was our apostle idle after the honor he had received of being called to attend the Saviour of the world; he immediately imparted the glad tidings of the Messiah's appearance to his brother Nathaniel, and conducted him to Jesus.

After being called to the apostleship we have very little record of him by the Evangelists. It was, however, to him that our Saviour proposed the question, where they should find bread sufficient to satisfy the hunger of so great a multitude. Philip answered, that it was not easy to procure so great a quantity; not considering that it was equally easy for Almighty power to feed double the number, when it should be his divine will. It was also to the same apostle that the Gentile proselytes, who came up to worship at Jerusalem, applied, when they were desirous to see the Saviour of the world. And it was with him our Lord had the discourse a little before the paschal supper.

The compassionate Jesus had been fortifying their minds with proper considerations against his departure from them, and had told them that he was going to prepare for them a place in the mansions of the heavenly Canaan; that he was "the way the truth and the life;" and that no man could come to the Father but by him.

Philip, not thoroughly understanding the force of his Master's reasonings, begged of him, that he would "shew them the Father."

Our blessed Lord gently reproved his ignorance, that after attending so long to his instructions, he should not know that he was the image of his Father, the express character of his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, appearing in him; that he said and did nothing but by his Father's appointment; which, if they did not believe, his miracles were a sufficient evidence: that such demands were, therefore, unnecessary and impertinent; and that it was an indication of great weakness in him, after three years' education under his discipline and instruction, to appear so ignorant with regard to these particulars.

CHAPTER II.

The transactions of St. Philip to the time of his Martyrdom.

THE ancients tell us, that in the distribution made by the apostles of the several regions of the world, the Upper Asia fell to his share, where he labored with an indefatigable diligence and industry. By the constancy and power of his preaching, and the efficacy of his miracles, he gained numerous converts, whom he baptized into the Christian faith, curing at once their bodies of infirmities and distempers, and their souls of errors and idolatry. He continued with them a considerable time in settling churches, and appointing them guides and ministers of religion.

After several years successfully exercising his apostolical office in all those parts, he came at last to Hierapolis, in Phrygia, a city remarkably rich and populous, but at the same time overrun with the most enormous idolatry.

St. Philip, being grieved to see the people so wretchedly enslaved by error and superstition, continually offered his addresses to heaven, till, by his prayers, and often calling on the name of Christ, he procured the death, or at least the vanishing of an enormous serpent, to which they paid adoration.

Having thus demolished their deity, he demonstrated to them how ridiculous and unjust it was for them to pay divine honors to such odious creatures: showed them that God alone was to be worshipped as the great parent of all the world, who in the beginning made man after his glorious image, and when fallen from that innocent and happy state, sent his own Son into the world to redeem him: that in order to perform this glorious work, he died on the cross, and rose again from the dead, and at the end of the world will come again to raise all the sons of men from the chambers of the dust, and sentence them to everlasting rewards or punishments. This discourse roused them from their lethargy; they were ashamed of their late idolatry, and great numbers embraced the doctrines of the Gospel.

This provoked the great enemy of mankind, and he had recourse to his old methods, cruelty and persecution. The magistrates of the city seized the apostle, and having thrown him into prison, caused him to be scourged. When this preparatory cruelty was over, he was led to execution, and, being bound, was hanged against a pillar; or, according to others, crucified. The apostle being dead, his body was taken down by St. Bartholomew, his fellow-laborer in the Gospel, and Mariamne, St. Philip's sister, the constant companion of his travels, and decently buried; after which, they confirmed the people in the faith of Christ and departed from them.

ST. BARTHOLOMEW.

CHAPTER I.

The transactions of St. Bartholomew, from his Birth to the Ascension of his great Master.

This apostle is mentioned amongst the twelve immediate disciples of our Lord under the appellation of Bartholomew, though it is evident, from divers passages of Scripture, that he was also called Nathaniel: we shall therefore, in our account of his life, consider the names of Nathaniel and Bartholomew as belonging to one and the same person.

With regard to his descent and family, some are of opinion that he was a Syrian, and that he was descended from the Ptolemies of Egypt. But it is plain from the Evangelical history,

that he was a Galilean; St. John having expressly told us that Nathaniel was of Cana, in Galilee.

The Scripture is silent with regard to his trade and manner of life, though, from some circumstances, there is room to imagine that he was a fisherman. He was at the first coming to Christ, conducted by Philip, who told him they had now found the long-expected Messiah, so often foretold by Moses, and the prophets, "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." And when he objected that the Messiah could not be born at Nazareth, Philip desired him to come and satisfy himself that he was the Messiah.

At his approach, our blessed Saviour saluted him with this honorable appellation, that he was an "Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile;" not in an absolute, but restricted sense; for perfection cannot be attached to human nature, but in the character of the blessed Jesus, of whom it is said, with peculiar propriety, that he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from *sinners*;" also that he "knew no sin, neither was guile," that is fraud, or deception, found in his tongue. Our Saviour knew that Bartholomew's doubt of his Messiahship arose from Philip's announcing him in the character of Jesus of Nazareth, a place stigmatized for the vices of its inhabitants; which on a similar occasion caused an interrogatory, which accords with Bartholomew's opinion; *Can* any *good* come out of Nazareth? Our Saviour therefore commends his frankness, by denominating him an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile. In another sense, he appeared to "be a true Israelite," or one that "waited for redemption in Israel," which, from the times mentioned in the Scripture prediction, he knew to be near at hand.

He was greatly surprised at our Lord's salutations, wondering how he could know him at first sight, as imagining he had never before seen his face. But he was answered, that he had seen him while he was yet under the fig-tree, even before Philip called him. Convinced by this instance of our Lord's divinity, he presently made his confession, that he was now sure that Jesus was the promised Messiah, that Son of God whom he had appointed to govern the church. Our blessed Saviour told him, that if from this instance he could believe him to be the Messiah, he should have far greater arguments to confirm his faith; for that he should hereafter behold the heavens opened to receive him, and the angels visibly appearing joyful at his entrance into the heavenly Canaan

CHAPTER II.

The transactions of St. Bartholomew, from the Ascension of Christ to his Martyrdom.

Our apostle having his peculiar spot allotted him, for the promulgation of the Gospel of his blessed Master, who had now ascended into heaven, and dispensed his Holy Spirit to fit and qualify his disciples for the important work, visited different parts of the world to preach the Gospel, and penetrated as far as the Hither India.

After spending considerable time in India, and the eastern extremities of Asia, he returned to the northern and western parts, and we find him at Hierapolis, in Phrygia, laboring in concert with St. Philip to plant Christianity in those parts, and to convince the blind idolaters of the evil of their ways, and direct them in the paths that lead to eternal salvation. This enraged the bigoted magistrates, and he was, together with St. Philip, designed for martyrdom, and in order to this, fastened to a cross: but their consciences pricked them for a time, they took St. Bartholomew down from the cross and set him at liberty.

From hence he retired to Lycaonia, and St. Chrysostom assures us that he instructed and trained up the inhabitants in the Christian discipline. His last remove was to Albanople, in Great Armenia, a place miserably overrun with idolatry, from which he labored to reclaim the people. But his endeavors to "turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God," were so far from having the desired effect, that it provoked the magistrates, who prevailed on the governor to put him to death, which he cheerfully underwent, sealing the truth of the doctrine he had preached with his blood.

ST. MATTHEW.

CHAPTER I.

The transactions of St. Matthew, from his Birth to the Ascension of Christ.

St. Matthew, called also Levi, though a Roman officer, was a true Hebrew, and probably a Galilean. His trade was

that of a publican or tax-gatherer to the Romans, an office detested by the generality of the Jews, on two accounts; first, because having farmed the custom of the Romans, they used every method of oppression to pay their rents to the Romans; secondly, because they demanded tribute of the Jews, who considered themselves as a free people, having received that privilege from God himself. And hence they had a common proverb among them, "Take not a wife out of that family in which there is a publican, for they are all publicans." That is, they are all thieves, robbers, and notorious sinners. And to this proverbial custom our blessed Saviour alludes, when speaking of an hardened sinner, on whom neither private reproofs, nor the public censures and admonitions of the church, can prevail. "Let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican."

Our blessed Saviour having cured a person long afflicted with the palsy, retired out of Capernaum, to walk by the sea-side, where he taught the people that flocked after him.

Here he saw Matthew sitting in his office, and called him to follow him. The man was rich, had a large and profitable employment, was a wise and prudent person, and doubtless understood what would be his loss to comply with the call of Jesus. He was not ignorant that he must exchange wealth for poverty, a custom-house for a prison, and rich and powerful masters for a naked and despised Saviour. But he overlooked all those considerations, left all his interest and relations, to become our Lord's disciple, and to embrace a more spiritual way of life.

The pharisees, who sought all opportunities of raising objections against the doctrines of the blessed Jesus, took this opportunity of suggesting to his disciples, that it was highly unbecoming so pure and holy a person as their Master appeared to be, to converse so familiarly with the worst of men; with publicans and sinners, persons infamous to a proverb. But he presently replied to them, that these were the sick, and therefore needed the physician; that his company was of most consequence where the souls of men most required it; that God himself preferred works of mercy and charity, especially in doing good to the souls of men, infinitely above all ritual observances; and that the principal design of his coming into the world was not to call the righteous, or those who, like themselves, vainly pretended to be so, but sinners, humble, self-convinced sinners to repentance.

After St. Matthew's election to the apostleship, he continued with the rest till the ascension of his great and beloved Master; but the evangelical writers have recorded nothing particular concerning him during that period

CHAPTER II.

The transactions of St. Matthew from the Ascension of Christ to his Martyrdom.

After our blessed Saviour's ascension into heaven, St. Matthew, for the first eight years at least, preached in different parts of Judea; but afterwards he left the country of Palestine, to convert the Gentile world. Before his departure he was entreated by the Jewish converts to write the history of the life and actions of the blessed Jesus, and leave it among them as a standing monument of what he had so often delivered to them in his sermons. This he readily complied with, as we shall more particularly mention in giving an account of his Gospel.

After his leaving Judea, he travelled into several parts, especially Ethiopia, but the particular places he visited are not known with any certainty.

However, after laboring indefatigably in the vineyard of his Master, he suffered martyrdom at a city of Ethiopia, called Naddabar; but by what kind of death is not absolutely known, though the general opinion is, that he was slain with an halbert.

St. Matthew was a remarkable instance of the power of religion, in bringing men to a better temper of mind. If we reflect upon his circumstances while he continued a stranger to the great Redeemer of mankind, we shall find that the love of the world had possessed his heart. But notwithstanding this, no sooner did Christ call him, than he abandoned without the least scruple or hesitation, all his riches; nay, he not only renounced his lucrative trade, but ran the greatest hazard of displeasing the masters who employed him, for quitting their service without giving them the least notice, and leaving his accounts in confusion. Had our blessed Saviour appeared as a secular prince, clothed with temporal power and authority, it would have been no wonder for him to have gone over to his service: but when he appeared under all the circumstances of meanness and disgrace, when he seems to promise his followers nothing but misery and sufferings in this life, and to propose no other rewards than the invisible encouragements of another world, his change appears truly wonderful and surprising; but divine grace can subdue all opposition.

His contempt of the world appeared in his exemplary temperance and abstemiousness from all delights and pleasures; nay even from the ordinary conveniences and accommodations of it.

He was mean and modest in his own opinion, always preferring others to himself; for whereas the other Evangelists, in describing the apostles by pairs, constantly place him before St. Thomas, he modestly places him before himself. The rest of the Evangelists are careful to mention the honor of his apostleship, but speak of his former sordid, dishonest, and disgraceful course of life, only under the name of Levi; while he himself sets it down with all the circumstances, under his own proper and common name. A conduct which at once commends the prudence and candor of the apostle, and suggests to us this useful reflection, that the greatest sinners are not excluded from divine grace; nor can any, if penitent, have just reason to despair, when publicans and sinners find mercy at the throne of grace.

The last thing we shall notice in the life of this apostle, is his Gospel, written at the entreaty of the Jewish converts, while he abode in Palestine; but at what time is uncertain; some will have it to have been written eight, some fifteen, and some thirty years, after our Lord's ascension. It was originally written in Hebrew, but soon after translated into Greek by one of the disciples.

After the Greek translation was admitted, the Hebrew copy was chiefly owned and used by the Nazarei, a middle sect between Jews and Christians; with the former, they adhered to the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law, and with the latter they believed in Christ, and embraced his religion; and hence this Gospel has been styled "The Gospel according to the Hebrews," and "The Gospel of the Nazarenes."

ST. THOMAS.

CHAPTER I.

The transactions of St. Thomas, from his Birth to the Ascension of our blessed Saviour.

Evangelical history is entirely silent with regard either to the country or kindred of Thomas. It is however, certain that he was a Jew, and in all probability a Galilean.

He was, together like the rest, called to the apostleship; and not long after, gave an eminent instance of his being ready to

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"Then saith he to Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God."—JOHN XX. 27, 28.

undergo the most melancholy fate that might attend him. For when the rest of the apostles dissuaded their Master from going into Judea, at the time of Lazarus' death, because the Jews lately endeavored to stone him, Thomas desired them not to hinder his journey thither, though it might cost them all their lives. "Let us go," said he, "that we may die with him;" concluding that, instead of Lazarus being raised from the dead, they should all, like him, be placed in the chambers of the dust.

When the holy Jesus, a little before his sufferings, had been speaking to them of the joys of heaven, and had told them that he was going to prepare mansions for them, that they might follow him, and that they knew both the place whither he was going, and the way thither; our apostle replied, that they knew not whither he was going, much less the way that would lead them thither. To which our Lord returned this short, but satisfactory answer, "I am the way;" I am the person whom the Father has sent into the world to show mankind the paths that lead to eternal life, and therefore you cannot miss the way, if you follow my example.

After the disciples had seen their great Master expire on the cross, their minds were distracted by hopes and fears concerning his resurrection, about which they were not then fully satisfied; which engaged him the sooner to hasten his appearance, that by the sensible manifestations of himself, he might put the matter beyond all possibility of dispute. Accordingly, the very day in which he arose from the dead, he came into the house where they were assembled, while the doors about them were close shut, and gave them sufficient assurance that he was risen from the dead.

At this meeting Thomas was absent, having probably never joined their company since their dispersion in the garden, where every one's fears prompted him to consult his own safety. At his return they told him that the Lord had appeared to them; but he obstinately refused to give credit to what they said, or believe that it was really he, presuming it rather a spectre or apparition, unless he might see the very print of the nails, and feel the wounds, in his hands and side.

But our compassionate Saviour would not take the least notice of his perverse obstinacy, but on that day seven-night came again to them, as they were solemnly met at their devotions, and calling to Thomas, bade him look upon his hands, put his fingers into the prints of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side, to satisfy his faith by a demonstration from the senses. Thomas was soon convinced of his error and obstinacy, confessing that he now acknowledged him to be his Lord and Master, saying, "My Lord and my God." Our Lord answered, that it was happy for him that he believed the testimony of his own

senses; out that it would have been more commendable in him to have believed without seeing, because it was foretold that the Son of God should burst the chains of death, and rise again from the dead.

CHAPTER II.

The transactions of St. Thomas, from the Ascension of the Son of God to his Death.

Our great Redeemer having, according to promise before his ascension, poured an extraordinary effusion of the Holy Ghost upon his disciples, to qualify them for the great work of preaching the Gospel, St. Thomas, as well as the rest, preached the Gospel in several parts of Judea; and after the dispersion of the Christian church in Jerusalem, repaired into Parthia, the province assigned him for his ministry. After which, as Sempronius and others inform us, he preached the Gospel to the Medes, Persians, Carmanians, Hyrcani, Bractarians, and the neighboring nations. During his preaching in Persia, he is said to have met with the Magi, or wise men, who had taken that long journey at our Saviour's birth to worship him, whom he baptized, and took with him as his companions and assistants in propagating the Gospel.

Leaving Persia, he travelled into Ethiopia, preaching the glad tidings of the Gospel, healing their sick, and working other miracles, to prove he had his commission from on high. And after travelling through these countries, he entered India.

When the Portuguese first visited these countries after their discovery of a passage by the Cape of Good Hope, they received the following particulars, partly from constant and uncontroverted traditions preserved by the Christians in those parts; namely, that St. Thomas came first to Socotora, an island in the Arabian Sea, and then to Cranganor, where having converted many from the error of their ways, he travelled farther into the East; and having successfully preached the Gospel, returned back to the kingdom of Coromandel, where, at Malapour, the metropolis of that kingdom, not far from the mouth of the Ganges, he began to erect a place for divine worship, till prohibited by the idolatrous priests, and Sagamo, prince of that country. But after performing several miracles, the work was suffered to proceed, and Sagamo himself embraced the Christian faith,

whose example was soon followed by great numbers of his friends and subjects.

This remarkable success alarmed the Brachmans, who plainly perceived that their religion would soon be extirpated, unless some method could be found of putting a stop to the progress of Christianity; and therefore resolved to put the apostle to death. At a small distance from the city was a tomb, where St. Thomas often retired for private devotions. Hither the Brachmans, and their armed followers pursued him, and while he was at prayer, they first shot at him with a shower of darts, after which one of the priests ran him through with a lance.

His body was taken up by his disciples, and buried in the church he had lately erected, and which was afterwards improved into a fabric of great magnificence.

St. Chrysostom says, that St. Thomas, who at first was the weakest and most incredulous of all the apostles, became, through Christ's condescension to satisfy his scruples, and the power of the divine grace, the most active and invincible of them all; travelling over most parts of the world, and living without fear in the midst of barbarous nations, through the efficacy of that Almighty power which can make the weakest vessels to perform acts of the greatest difficulty and moment.

ST. JAMES THE LESS.

It has been doubted by some, whether this was the same with that St. James who was afterwards bishop of Jerusalem, two of this name being mentioned in the sacred writings; namely, St. James the Great, and St. James the Less, both apostles. The ancients mentioned a third, surnamed the Just, which they will have to be distinct from the former, and bishop of Jerusalem. But this opinion is built upon a sandy foundation, for nothing is plainer than that St. James the apostle (whom St. Paul calls "our Lord's brother," and reckons, with Peter and John, one of the pillars of the church) was the same who presided among the apostles, doubtless by virtue of his Episcopal office, and determined the causes in the synod of Jerusalem. It is reasonable to think that he was the son of Joseph, afterwards the husband of Mary, by his first wife, whom St. Jerome styles Escha, and adds, that she was the daughter of Aggi, brother to Zacha-ias,

the father of John the Baptist. Hence he was reputed our Lord's brother. We find indeed several mentioned as the brethren of our Saviour in the evangelical history; but in what sense, was greatly controverted by the ancients. St. Jerome, St. Chrysostom, and some others, will have them to be called, from their being the sons of Mary, cousin-german, or, according to the Hebrew idiom, sister to the virgin Mary. But Eusebius, Epiphanius, and many others, tell us, they were the children of Joseph by a former wife. And this seems to be more natural, and best agrees with what the evangelists say of them, when they enumerate the question of the Jews: evidently implying their astonishment, that a person descended from, and related to, not the opulent and the mighty, but those of a humble sphere, as his parents and brethren were known to be, should possess such extraordinary endowments. The Jews looked for a Messiah invested with all the pomp and splendor of an earthly potentate; well then might they ask, when they beheld the display of his power, "Whence then hath this man these things?"

After the resurrection, he was honored with the particular appearance of our Lord to him, which, though passed over in silence by the evangelists, is recorded by St. Paul.

Some time after this appearance, he was chosen bishop of Jerusalem, and preferred before all the rest for his near relation to Christ; for the same reason we find Simon chosen to be his immediate successor in that see, because, after St. James, he was our Lord's next kinsman: a consideration that made Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, though they had been peculiarly honored by our Saviour, not to contend for this high and honorable station, but freely chose James bishop of Jerusalem.

When St. Paul came to Jerusalem after his conversion, he applied to St. James, and was honored by him with "the right hand of fellowship." And it was to St. James that Peter sent the news of his miraculous deliverance out of prison. "Go," said he, "shew these things unto James and to the brethren;" that is, to the whole church, especially to St. James the pastor of it.

He performed every part of his duty with all possible care and industry, omitting no particular necessary to be observed by a diligent and faithful guide of souls, strengthening the weak, instructing the ignorant, refuting the erroneous, reproving the obstinate: and by the constancy of his sermons, conquering the stubbornness of that perverse and refractory generation he had to deal with, many of the nobler and better sort being persuaded to embrace the Christian faith.

But a person so careful, so successful in his charge, could not fail of exciting the spite and malice of his enemies; a sort of men to whom the apostle has given too true a character, that

" they please not God, and are contrary to all men." They were vexed to see St. Paul had escaped their hands, by appealing unto Cæsar; and therefore turned their fury against St. James: but being unable to effect their design under the government of Festus, they determined to attempt it under the procuratorship of Albinus his successor, Ananus the Younger, of the sect of the Sadducees, being high priest.

In order to this a council was summoned, and the apostle, with others, arraigned and condemned as violators of the law. But that the action might appear more plausible and popular, the scribes and pharisees, masters in the art of dissimulation, endeavored to ensnare him; and, at their first coming, told him, that they had all placed the greatest confidence in him; that the whole nation as well as they, gave him the title of a just man, and one that was no respecter of persons; that they therefore desired that he would correct the error and false opinion the people had conceived of Jesus, whom they considered as the Messiah, and take this opportunity of the universal confluence to the paschal solemnity to set them right in their opinions in this particular, and would go with them to the top of the temple, where he might be seen and heard by all.

The apostle readily consented, and being advantageously placed on a pinnacle of the temple, they addressed him in the following manner; " Tell us, for we have all the reason in the world to believe, that the people are thus generally led away, with the doctrine of Jesus who was crucified; tell us, what is the instruction of the crucified Jesus?" To which the apostle answered, with an audible voice, " Why do you inquire of Jesus the Son of Man? He sits in heaven, at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and will come again in the clouds of heaven." The people below hearing this, glorified the blessed Jesus, and openly proclaimed, " Hosanna to the Son of David."

The scribes and pharisees now perceived that they had acted foolishly; that instead of altering, they had confirmed the people in their belief; and that there was no other way left but to despatch him immediately, in order to warn others by his sufferings, not to believe in Jesus of Nazareth. Accordingly they suddenly cried out, That James himself was seduced, and become an impostor; and they immediately threw him from the pinnacle on which he stood, into the court below; but not being killed on the spot, he recovered himself so far as to rise on his knees, and pray fervently to heaven for his murderers. But malice is too diabolical to be pacified with kindness, or satisfied with cruelty. Accordingly his enemies, vexed that they had not fully accomplished their work, poured a shower of stones upon him, while he was imploring their forgiveness at the

throne of grace; and one of them dissatisfied with this cruel treatment, put an end to his misery with a fuller's club.

Thus did this great and good man finish his course, in the ninety-sixth year of his age, and about twenty-four years after our blessed Saviour's ascension into heaven. His death was lamented by all good men, even by the sober and just persons among the Jews themselves, as Josephus himself confesses.

He was a man of exemplary piety and devotion, educated under the strictest rules and institutions of religion. Prayer was his constant business and delight; he seems as it were to have lived upon it, and continually to have had his conversation in heaven; and he who has told us, "That the prayer of a righteous man availeth much," found it so by his own experience, heaven lending a more immediate ear to his petitions; so that in a time of remarkable drought, on his praying for rain, the clouds melted into fruitful showers.

Nor was his charity towards men less than his piety towards God; he did good to all, watched over the souls of men, and studied to advance their eternal welfare. He was of a remarkably meek and humble temper, honoring what was excellent in others, and concealing what was valuable in himself. Neither the eminence of his relation to the blessed Jesus, nor the dignity of the place he so worthily filled, could induce him to entertain lofty thoughts of himself above the rest of his brethren: on the contrary, he strove to conceal whatever might place him in a higher rank than the other disciples of the Lord of glory. Though he was a relative to the Redeemer of mankind, he styles himself only "the servant of our Lord Jesus Christ," not so much as mentioning his being an apostle.

ST. SIMON THE ZEALOT.

St. Simon, in the catalogue of the apostles, is styled "Simon the Canaanite," whence some conjecture he was born in Cana of Galilee, and others will have him to have been the bridegroom mentioned by St. John, at whose marriage our blessed Saviour turned the water into wine. But this word has no relation to his country, or the place of his nativity, being derived from the Hebrew word "kana," which signifies "zeal," and denotes a warm and sprightly temper. What some of the Evan-

gelists therefore call "Canaanite," others, rendering the Hebrew by the Greek word, style "Zealot:" not from his great zeal, his ardent affection to his Master, and his desire of advancing his religion in the world, but from his warm, active temper, and zealous forwardness in some particular sect of religion before his coming to our Saviour.

In order to understand this the better, it will be necessary to observe, that as there were several sects and parties among the Jews, so there was one, either a distinct sect, or at least a branch, of the pharisees, called the sect of the Zealots. This sect of the zealots took upon them to execute punishments in extraordinary cases; and that not only by the connivance, but with the permission both of the rulers and people, till, in process of time, their zeal degenerated into all kinds of licentiousness and wild extravagance; and they not only became the pests of the commonwealth at home, but opened the door for the Romans to break in upon them, to their final and irrevocable ruin. They were continually prompting the people to throw off the Roman yoke, and assert their natural liberty, taking care, when they had thrown all things into confusion, to make their own advantage of the tumult. Josephus gives a large account of them, and every where bewails them as the great plague of the nation.

Many attempts were made, especially by Annas the high-priest, to reduce them to order, and oblige them to observe the rules of sobriety: but all were in vain. They continued their violent proceedings, and joining with the Idumeans, committed every kind of outrage. They broke into the sanctuary, slew the priests themselves before the altar, and filled the streets of Jerusalem with tumults, rapine, and blood. Nay, when Jerusalem was closely besieged by the Roman army, they continued their detestable proceedings, creating fresh tumults and factions, and were indeed the principal cause of the ill success of the Jews in that fatal war.

This is a true account of the sect of the Zealots; though, whatever St. Simon was before, we have no reason to suspect, but after his conversion he was very zealous for the honor of his Master, and considered all those who were enemies to Christ as enemies to himself, however near they might be to him in any natural relation. And as he was very exact in all the practical duties of the Christian religion, so he showed a very serious and pious indignation towards those who professed religion, and a faith in Christ with their mouths, but dishonored their sacred profession, by their irregular and vicious lives, as some of the first professing Christians really did.

St. Simon continued in communion with the rest of the apostles and disciples at Jerusalem; and at the feast of Pentecost

received the same miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost; so that as he was qualified with the rest of his brethren for the apostolical office, in propagating the Gospel of the Son of God, we cannot doubt of his exercising his gifts with the same zeal and fidelity, though in what part of the world is uncertain. Some say he went into Egypt, Cyrene, and Africa, preaching the Gospel to the inhabitants of those remote and barbarous countries. And others add that after he had passed through those burning wastes, he took ship, and visited the frozen regions of the north, preaching the Gospel to the inhabitants of the western parts, and even to Britain; where having converted great multitudes and sustained the greatest hardships and persecutions, he was at last crucified, and buried in some parts of Great Britain, but the place where is unknown.

ST. JUDE.

This apostle is mentioned by three several names in the evangelical history, namely, Jude or Judas, Thaddeus and Lebbeus.

He was brother to St. James the Less, afterwards bishop of Jerusalem, being the son of Joseph the reputed father of Christ, by a former wife. It is not known when or by what means he became a disciple of our blessed Saviour, nothing being said of him, till we find him in the catalogue of the twelve apostles; nor afterwards till Christ's last supper, when discoursing with them about his departure, and comforting them with a promise, that he would return to them again (meaning after his resurrection) and that the "world should see him no more, though they should see him," our apostle said to his Master, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?"

Paulinus tells us that the province which fell to the share of St. Jude, in the apostolic division of the provinces, was Lybia; but he does not tell us whether it was the Cyrenian Lybia, which is thought to have received the Gospel from St. Mark, or the more southern parts of Africa. But however that be, in his first setting out to preach the Gospel, he travelled up and down Judea and Galilee; then through Samaria unto Idumea, and to the cities of Arabia and the neighboring countries, and afterwards to

Syria and Mesopotamia. Nicephorus adds, that he came at last to Edessa, where Abagarus governed, and where Thaddeus, one of the seventy, had already sown the seeds of the Gospel. Here he perfected what the other had begun; and having by his sermons and miracles established the religion of Jesus, he died in peace; but others say that he was slain at Berytus, and honorably buried there. The writers of the Latin Church are unanimous in declaring that he travelled into Persia, where, after great success in his apostolical ministry for many years, he was at last, for his freely and openly reproving the superstitious rites and customs of the Magi, cruelly put to death.

St. Jude left only one epistle, which is placed the last of those seven styled catholic, in the sacred canon. It hath no particular inscription as the other six have, but it is thought to have been primarily intended for the Christian Jews, in their several dispersions, as St. Peter's epistles were. In it he tells them "that he at first intended to write to them in general of the common salvation, and establish and confirm them in it; but seeing the doctrine of Christ attacked on every side by heretics, he conceived it more necessary to spend his time in exhorting them to fight manfully in defence of the faith once delivered to the saints, and oppose the false teachers who labored so indefatigably to corrupt it."

It was some time before this epistle was generally received in the church. The author, indeed, like St. James, St. John, and sometimes St. Paul himself, does not call himself an apostle, styling himself only "the servant of Christ." But he has added what is equivalent, "Jude the brother of James," a character that can belong to no one but our apostle. And surely the humility of a follower of Jesus should be no objection against his writings.

ST. MATTHIAS.

As Matthias was not an apostle of the first election, immediately called and chosen of the Son of God himself, it cannot be expected that any account of him can be found in the evangelical history. He was one of our Lord's disciples, probably one of the seventy; he had attended on him the whole time of his public ministry, and after his death was elected into the apostleship, to

supply the place of Judas, who, after betraying his great Lord and Master, laid violent hands on himself.

The defection of Judas having made a vacancy in the apostolic college, the first thing they did, after the return from mount Olivet, when their great Master ascended to the throne of his glory, was to fill up this vacancy with a proper person.

Accordingly, two persons were proposed, Joseph called Barsabas, and Matthias, both duly qualified for the important office. The method of election was by lots, a way common both among the Jews and Gentiles for determining doubtful and difficult cases, especially in choosing judges or magistrates. And this course seems to have been taken by the apostle, because the Holy Ghost was not yet given, by whose immediate dictates and inspirations they were afterwards chiefly guided. The prayer being ended, the lots were drawn, by which it appeared that Matthias was the person, and he was accordingly numbered among the twelve apostles.

Not long after this election the promised powers of the Holy Ghost were conferred on the apostles, to qualify them for that great and difficult employment upon which they were sent, namely, the establishing the holy religion of the Son of God among the children of men.

St. Matthias spent the first year of his ministry in Judea, where he reaped a very considerable harvest of souls, and then travelled into different parts of the world, to publish the glad tidings of salvation to a people who had never before heard of a Saviour; but the particular parts he visited are not certainly known.

It is uncertain by what kind of death he left the regions of mortality, and sealed the truth of the Gospel he had so assiduously preached, with his blood. Dorotheus says, he finished his course at Sebastople, and was buried there, near the temple of the sun. An ancient Martyrology reports him to have been seized by the Jews, and as a blasphemer to have been stoned and then beheaded. But the Greek offices, supported herein by several ancient brevaries, tell us that he was crucified.

ST. MARK.

St. Mark was descended from Jewish parents, and of the tribe of Levi. Nor was it uncommon among the Jews to

change their names on some remarkable revolution or accident of life, or when they intended to travel into any of the European provinces of the Roman empire.

The ancients generally considered him as one of the seventy disciples; and Epiphanus expressly tells us, that he was one of those who, taking exception at our Lord's discourse of "eating his flesh and drinking his blood, went back and walked no more with him." But there appears no manner of foundation for these opinions, nor either for that of Nicephorus, who will have him to be the son of St. Peter's sister.

Eusebius tells us, that St. Mark was sent into Egypt by St. Peter to preach the Gospel, and accordingly planted a church in Alexandria, the metropolis of it; and his success was so very remarkable, that he converted multitudes both of men and women; persuading them not only to embrace the Christian religion, but also a life of more than ordinary strictness.

St. Mark did not confine himself to Alexandria, and the oriental parts of Egypt, but removed westward to Lybia, passing through the countries of Marmacia, Pentapolis, and others adjacent, where, though the people were both barbarous in their manners, and idolatrous in their worship, yet by his preaching and miracles he prevailed on them to embrace the tenets of the Gospel; nor did he leave them till he had confirmed them in the faith.

After this long tour he returned to Alexandria, where he preached with the greatest freedom, ordering and disposing of the affairs of the church, and wisely provided for a succession, by constituting governors and pastors of it. But the restless enemy of the souls of men would not suffer our apostle to continue in peace and quietness, for while he was assiduously laboring in the vineyard of his Master, the idolatrous inhabitants, about the time of Easter, when they were celebrating the solemnities of Serapis, tumultuously entered the church, forced St. Mark, then performing divine service, from thence; and binding his feet with cords, dragged him through the streets, and over the most craggy places, to the Bucelus, a precipice near the sea, leaving him there in a lonesome prison, for that night; but his great and beloved Master appeared to him in a vision, comforting and encouraging his soul, under the ruins of his shattered body. The next morning early the tragedy began afresh, for they dragged him about in the same cruel and barbarous manner till he expired. But their malice did not end with his death; they burnt his mangled body, after they had so inhumanly deprived it of life; but the Christians, after the horrid tragedy was over, gathered up his bones and ashes, and decently interred them near the place where he used to preach. His remains were afterwards, with great pomp, removed from

Alexandria to Venice, where they were religiously honored, and he was adopted the tutelar saint and patron of that state.

He suffered martyrdom on the 25th of April, but the year is not absolutely known: the most probable opinion however is that it happened about the end of Nero's reign.

His Gospel, the only writing he left behind him, was written at the entreaty and earnest desire of the converts at Rome, who, not content with having heard St. Peter preach, pressed St. Mark, his fellow-disciple, to commit to writing an historical account of what he had delivered to them, which he performed with equal faithfulness and brevity, and being perused and approved of by St. Peter, it was commanded to be publicly read in their assemblies. It was frequently styled St. Peter's Gospel, not because he dictated it to St. Mark, but because the latter composed it in the same manner as St. Peter usually delivered his discourses to the people. And this is probably the reason of what St. Chrysostom observes, that in his style of expression he delights to imitate St. Peter, representing a great deal in a few words. The remarkable impartiality he observes in all his relations is plain from hence, that so far from concealing the shameful lapse and denial of Peter, he describes it with more aggravating circumstances than any of the other evangelists.

ST. LUKE.

This disciple of the blessed Jesus was born at Antioch, the metropolis of Syria, a city celebrated by the greatest writers of these times for the pleasantness of its situation, the fertility of its soil, the richness of its commerce, the wisdom of its senate, and the civility and politeness of its inhabitants. It was eminent for schools of learning, which produced the most renowned masters in the arts and sciences. So that, being born, as it were, in the lap of the muses, he could not well fail of acquiring an ingenious and liberal education. But he was not contented with the learning of his own country; he travelled for improvement into several parts of Greece and Egypt, and became particularly skilled in physic, which he made his profession.

But those who would, from this particular, infer the quality of his birth and fortune, forget that the healing art was in those

early times generally practised by servants; and hence Grotius is of opinion, that St. Luke was carried to Rome, and lived there a servant to some noble family, in quality of physician; but after obtaining his freedom he returned into his own country, and probably continued his profession till his death, it being so highly consistent with, and in many cases subservient to, the care of souls.

He was also famous for his skill in another art, namely, painting, as appears from an ancient inscription found in a vault near the church of St. Maria de Via Lata, at Rome, supposed to have been the place where St. Paul dwelt, which mentions a picture of the blessed Virgin, Una ex vii. ab Luca depictis, "being one of the seven painted by St. Luke."

St. Luke was a Jewish proselyte; but at what time he became a Christian is uncertain. It is the opinion of some, from the introduction to his Gospel, that he had the facts from the reports of others, who were eye-witnesses, and suppose him to have been converted by St. Paul: and that he learned the history of his Gospel from the conversation of that apostle, and wrote it under his direction; and that when St. Paul, in one of his epistles, says, "according to my gospel," he means this of St. Luke, which he styled "his," from the great share he had in the composition of it.

On the other hand, those who hold that he wrote his Gospel from his own personal knowledge, observe, that he could not receive it from St. Paul, as an eye-witness of the matters contained in it, because all those matters were transacted before his conversion; and that he never saw our Lord before he appeared to him in his journey to Damascus, which was some time after he ascended into heaven. Consequently when St. Paul says, "according to my Gospel," he means no more than that Gospel in general which he preached; the whole preaching of the apostles being styled the Gospel.

But however this be, St. Luke became the inseparable companion of St. Paul, in all his travels, and his constant fellow-laborer in the work of the ministry. This endeared him to that apostle, who seems delighted with owning him for his fellow-laborer, and in calling him "the beloved physician," and the "brother whose praise is in the Gospel."

St. Luke wrote two books for the use of the church, his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles; both which he dedicated to Theophilus, which many of the ancients suppose to be a feigned name, denoting a lover of God, a title common to all sincere Christians. But others think it was a real person, because the title of "most excellent" is attributed to him; the usual title and form of address in those times to princes and great men.

His Gospel contains the principal transactions of our Lord's life; and the particulars omitted by him are in general of less importance than those of the other Evangelists.

With regard to the Acts of the Apostles, written by St. Luke, the work was, no doubt, performed at Rome, about the time of St. Paul's residing there, with which he concludes his history. It contains the actions, and sometimes the sufferings, of the principal apostles, especially St. Paul, whose activity in the cause of Christ made him bear a great part in the labors of his Master; and St. Luke being his constant attendant, an eye-witness of the whole carriage of his life, and privy to his most intimate transactions, was consequently capable of giving a more full and satisfactory account of them. Among other things, he enumerates the great miracles the apostles did in confirmation of their doctrine.

In both these treatises his manner of writing is exact and accurate; his style noble and elegant, sublime and lofty, and yet clear and perspicuous, flowing with an easy and natural grace and sweetness, admirably adapted to an historical design. In short, as an historian he was faithful in his relations, and elegant in his writings; as a minister, careful and diligent for the good of souls; as a Christian, devout and pious; and to crown all the rest, laid down his life in testimony of the Gospel he had both preached and published to the world.

ST. BARNABAS.

St. Barnabas, was at first called Joses, a softer termination generally given by the Greeks to Joseph. His fellow disciples added the name of Barnabas, as significant of some extraordinary property in him. St. Luke interprets it "the son of consolation," from his being ever ready to minister to the afflicted, both by word and action.

He was a descendant of the tribe of Levi, of a family removed out of Judea, and settled in the isle of Cyprus, where they had purchased an estate, as the Levites might do out of their own country. His parents finding him of a promising genius and disposition, placed him in one of the schools of Jerusalem, under the tuition of Gamaliel, St. Paul's master; an incident

which, in all probability, laid the first foundation for that intimacy that afterwards subsisted between these two eminent servants of the blessed Jesus.

The first mention we find of St. Barnabas in the Holy Scriptures, is the record of that great and worthy service he did the church of Christ, by succoring it with the sale of his patrimony in Cyprus, the whole price of which he laid at the apostles' feet, to be put into the common stock, and disposed of as they should think fit among the indigent followers of the holy Jesus.

And now St. Barnabas became considerable in the ministry and government of the church: for we find that St. Paul, coming to Jerusalem three years after his conversion, and not readily procuring admittance into the church, because he had been so grievous a persecutor of it, and might still be suspected of a design to betray it, addressed himself to Barnabas, a leading man among the Christians, and one that had personal knowledge of him. He accordingly introduced him to Peter and James, and satisfied them of the sincerity of his conversion, and in what a miraculous manner it was brought about. This recommendation carried so much weight with it, that Paul was not only received into the communion of the apostles, but taken into Peter's house, "and abode with him fifteen days." *Gal.* i. 18.

About four or five years after this, the agreeable news was brought to Jerusalem, that several of their body who had been driven out of Judea by the persecutions raised about St. Stephen, had preached at Antioch with such success, that a great number, both of Jews and proselytes, embraced Christianity; and were desirous that some of the superior order would come down and confirm them. This request was immediately granted, and Barnabas was deputed to settle the new plantation. Being himself "a good man and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith," his charitable deeds accompanying his discourses, and his pious life exemplifying his sound doctrine, the people were greatly influenced by him, and very considerable additions were made to the Christian church. But there being too large a field for one laborer, he went to fetch Saul from Tarsus, who came back with him to Antioch, and assisted him a whole year in establishing that church. Their labors prospered: their assemblies were crowded, and the disciples, who before this were called among themselves, "brethren, believers, elect," and by their enemies, "Nazarenes, and Galileans," were now called "Christians" first at Antioch.

When the apostles had fulfilled their charitable embassy, and stayed some time at Jerusalem, to see the good effects of it, they returned again to Antioch, bringing with them John, whose surname was Mark, the son of Mary, sister to Barnabas, and at

whose house the disciples found both security for their persons, and conveniency for the solemnities of their worship. But soon after the apostles returned to Antioch, an express relation was made to the church by the mouth of one of the prophets who ministered there, that Barnabas and Saul should be set apart for an extraordinary work, unto which the Holy Ghost had appointed them. Upon this declaration, the church set apart a day for a solemn mission; after devout prayer and fasting, they laid their hands upon them, and ordained them to their office; which was to travel over certain countries, and preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. From this joint commission Barnabas obtained the name of an apostle, not only among later writers of the church, but with St. Paul himself, as we find in the history of the Acts of the Apostles.

Paul and Barnabas being thus consecrated "the apostles of the Gentiles," entered upon their province, taking with them John Mark, for their minister or deacon, who assisted them in many ecclesiastical offices, particularly in taking care of the poor.

The first city they visited after their departure from Antioch was Selucia, a city of Syria, adjoining to the sea; from whence they sailed for the island of Cyprus, the native place of St. Barnabas, and arrived at Salamis, a port formerly remarkable for its trade. Here they boldly preached the doctrines of the Gospel in the synagogues of the Jews: and from thence travelled to Paphos, the capital of the island, and famous for a temple dedicated to Venus, the tutelar goddess of Cyprus. Here their preaching was attended with remarkable success; Sergius Paulus, the proconsul, being, among others, converted to the Christian faith.

Leaving Cyprus, they crossed the sea to preach in Pamphilia, where their deacon John, to the great grief of his uncle Barnabas, left them, and returned to Jerusalem: either tired with continual travels, or discouraged at the unavoidable dangers and difficulties which experience had sufficiently informed him would constantly attend the preachers of the Gospel from hardened Jews and idolatrous Gentiles.

Soon after their arrival at Lystra, Paul cured a man who had been lame from his mother's womb, which so astonished the inhabitants, that they believed them to be gods, who had visited the world in the forms of men. Barnabas they treated as Jupiter, their sovereign deity, either because of his age, or the gravity and comeliness of his person; for all the writers of antiquity represent him as a person of venerable aspect, and a majestic presence. But the apostles, with the greatest humility, declared themselves to be but mortals: and the inconstant populace soon satisfied themselves of the truth of what they had asserted; the

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"And they called Barnabas Jupiter; and Paul called they Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people."—Acts xiv. 12, 13.

at the persuasion of their indefatigable persecutors, who followed them thither also, they made an assault upon them, and stoned Paul, till they left him for dead. But, supported by an invisible power from on high, he soon recovered his spirits and strength, and the apostles immediately departed for Derbe. Soon after their arrival, they again applied themselves to the work of the ministry, and converted many to the religion of the blessed Jesus.

From Derbe they returned back to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, in Pisidia, "confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith; and that we must through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God." *Acts*, xiv. 22. After a short stay they again visited the churches of Pamphilia, Perga, and Attala, where they took ship, and sailed to Antioch in Syria, the place from whence they first set out. Soon after their arrival, they called the church of this city together, and gave them an account of their travels, and the great success with which their preaching in the Gentile world had been attended.

But they had not long continued in this city, before their assistance was required to compose a difference in the church, occasioned by some of the Jewish converts, who endeavored to persuade the Gentiles that they were bound to observe the law of Moses, as well as that of Christ; and be circumcised as well as baptized. Barnabas endeavored to dissuade the zealots from pressing such unnecessary observances; but all his endeavors proving ineffectual, he was deputed with St. Paul and others, to the church at Jerusalem, to submit the question, to be determined there in a full assembly. During their stay at Jerusalem, Mark, in all probability reconciled himself to Barnabas, and returned with him and St. Paul to Antioch, after they had succeeded in their business in Jerusalem, and obtained a decree from the synod there, that the Gentile converts should not have circumcision and other Mosaic rites imposed upon them.

This determination generally comforted and quieted the minds of the Gentiles, but it did not prevent the bigoted Jews from keeping up a separation from them; and that with so much obstinacy, that when St. Peter, some time after, came to Antioch, he, for fear of offending them, deviated from his former practice and late speech and vote in the synod of Jerusalem, by refraining from all kinds of communion with the Gentiles: and Barnabas himself, though so great and good a man, was induced, by the authority of his example, to commit the same error; but, doubtless, on being reproved by St. Paul, they both took more courage, and walked according to the true liberty and freedom of the Gospel.

Some days after the last occurrence, Paul made a proposal to Barnabas, that they should repeat their late travels among the Gentiles, and see how the churches they had planted increased in their numbers, and improved in the doctrine they had taught them. Barnabas very readily complied with the motion; but desired they might take with them his reconciled nephew, John Mark. This Paul absolutely refused, because, in their former voyage, Mark had not shown the constancy of a faithful minister of Christ, but consulted his own ease at a dangerous juncture; departed from them without leave at Pamphilia, and returned to Jerusalem. Barnabas still insisted on taking him; and the other continuing as resolutely to oppose it, a short debate arose, which terminated in a separation, whereby these two holy men, who had for several years been companions in the ministry, and with united endeavors propagated the Gospel of the Son of God, now took different provinces. Barnabas, with his kinsman, sailed to his own country, Cyprus; and Paul, accompanied by Silas, travelled to the churches of Syria and Cicilia.

After this separation from St. Paul, the sacred writings give us no account of St. Barnabas; nor are the ecclesiastical writers agreed among themselves with regard to the actions of this apostle after his sailing for Cyprus. This however seems to be certain, that he did not spend the whole remainder of his life in that island, but visited different parts of the world, working other miracles among the Gentiles. After long and painful travels, attended with different degrees of success, in different places, he returned to Cyprus, his native country, where he suffered martyrdom in the following manner: certain Jews coming from Syria and Salamis, where Barnabas was then preaching the Gospel, and being highly exasperated at his extraordinary success, fell upon him as he was disputing in the synagogue, dragged him out, and after the most inhuman tortures, stoned him to death. His kinsman, John Mark, who was a spectator of this barbarous action, privately interred his body in a cave, where it remained till the time of the emperor Zeno, in the year of Christ, 485, when it was discovered, with St. Matthew's Gospel in Hebrew, written with his own hand, lying on his breast.

ST. STEPHEN.

Both the Scriptures and the ancient writers are silent with regard to the birth, country, and parents of St. Stephen. Epiphanus is of opinion that he was one of the seventy disciples: but this is very uncertain. Our blessed Saviour appointed his seventy disciples to teach the doctrines, and preach the glad tidings of the Gospel; but it does not appear that St. Stephen and the six other first deacons, had any particular designation before they were chosen for the service of the tables; and therefore St. Stephen could not have been one of our Lord's disciples, though he might have often followed him, and listened to his discourses.

He was remarkably zealous for the cause of religion, and full of the Holy Ghost: working many wonderful miracles before the people, and pressing them with the greatest earnestness, to embrace the doctrines of the Gospel.

This highly provoked the Jews; and some of the synagogues of the freed-men of Cyrenia, Alexandria, and other places, entered into dispute with him; but being unable to resist the wisdom and spirit with which he spake, they suborned false witnesses against him, to testify that they had heard him blaspheme against Moses and against God. Nor did they stop here; they stirred up the people by their calumnies; so that they dragged him before the council of the nation, or great Sanhedrim, where they produced false witnesses against him, who deposed that they heard him speak against the temple, and against the law, and affirm that Jesus of Nazareth would destroy the holy place, and abolish the law of Moses. Stephen, supported by his own innocence, and an invisible power from on high, appeared undaunted in the midst of this assembly, and his countenance shone like that of an angel; when the high priest asking him what he had to offer against the accusation laid to his charge, he answered in a plain and faithful address to the Jews, which he closed in the following manner.

"Ye stiff-necked, ye uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye will for ever resist the Holy Ghost. Ye tread in the paths of your fathers; as they did, so do you still continue to do. Did not your fathers persecute every one of the prophets? Did not they slay them who showed the coming of the Holy One, whom ye yourselves have betrayed and murdered? Ye have received the law by the disposition of angels, but never kept it."

At these words they were so highly enraged, that they all gnashed their teeth against him. But Stephen, lifting up his eyes to heaven, saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of Omnipotence. Upon which, he said to the council, "I see the heavens open, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." This so greatly provoked the Jews, that they cried out with one voice, and stopped their ears, as if they had heard some dreadful blasphemy; and falling upon him, they dragged him out of the city and stoned him to death. It was the custom of the Jews on these occasions, for the witnesses to throw the first stone. Whether they observed this particular at the martyrdom of Stephen is uncertain; but the Evangelist tells us, that the witnesses were principally concerned in this action; for they stripped off their clothes, and laid them at the feet of a young man whose name was Saul, then a violent persecutor of the Christian church, but afterwards one of the most zealous preachers of the Gospel.

Stephen, while they were mangling his body with stones, was praying to the Omnipotent for their pardon. "Lord," said he, "lay not this sin to their charge." And then calling on his dear Redeemer to receive his spirit, he yielded up his soul.

TIMOTHY.

TIMOTHY was a convert and disciple of St. Paul. He was born, according to some, at Lystra; or, according to others, at Derbe. His father was a Gentile, but his mother a Jewess, whose name was Eunice, and that of his grandmother, Lois.

These particulars are taken notice of because St. Paul commends their piety and the good education which they had given Timothy. When St. Paul came to Derbe and Lystra, about the year of Christ 51 or 52, the brethren gave a very advantageous testimony of the merit and good disposition of Timothy: and the apostle would have him along with him, and he initiated him at Lystra before he received him into his company. Timothy applied himself to labor with St. Paul in the business of the Gospel; and did him very important services, through the whole course of his preaching. It is not known when he was made a bishop; but it is believed that he received very early the imposition of the apostle's hands; and that in consequence of a

particular revelation, or from the Holy Ghost. St. Paul calls him not only his dearly beloved son, but also his brother, the companion of his labors, and a man of God. He declared there were none more united with him in heart and mind, than Timothy.

This holy disciple accompanied St. Paul to Macedonia, to Philippi, to Thessalonica, to Berea; and when the apostle went from Berea, he left Timothy and Silas there to confirm the converts. When he came to Athens, he sent for Timothy to come thither to him; and when he was come and had given him an account of the churches of Macedonia, St. Paul sent him back to Thessalonica, from whence he afterwards returned with Silas, and came to St. Paul at Corinth. There he continued with him, and the apostle mentions him, with Silas, at the beginning of the two epistles which he then wrote to the Thessalonians.

Some years after this, St. Paul sent Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia; and gave Timothy orders to call at Corinth, to refresh the minds of the Corinthians, with regard to the truths which he had inculcated in them. Some time after, writing to the same Corinthians, he recommends them to take care of Timothy, and send him back in peace; after which, Timothy returned to St. Paul in Asia, who there staid for him. They went together into Macedonia; and the apostle puts Timothy's name with his own, before the second epistle to the Corinthians, which he wrote to them from Macedonia, about the middle of the year of Christ 57. And he sends his recommendations to the Romans in the letter which he wrote to them from Corinth the same year.

When St. Paul returned from Rome, in 64, he left Timothy at Ephesus to take care of that church, of which he was the first bishop, as he is recognized by the council of Chalcedon. St. Paul wrote to him from Macedonia, the first of the two letters which are addressed to him. He recommends him to be more moderate in his austerities, and to drink a little wine because of the weakness of his stomach, and his frequent infirmities. After the apostle came to Rome, in the year 65, being now very near his death, he wrote to him his second letter, which was full of the marks of his kindness and tenderness for this his dear disciple: and which is justly looked upon as the last will of St. Paul.—He desires him to come to Rome to him before winter, and bring with him several things which St. Paul had left at Troas. If Timothy went to Rome, as it is probable he did, he must have been a witness of the martyrdom of this apostle, in the year of Christ 66.

If he did not die before the year 97, we can hardly doubt but that he must be the pastor of the church of Ephesus, to whom John writes in his Revelations: though the reproaches with which he seems to load him for his instability in having left his first

love, do not seem to agree to so holy a man as Timothy was.—Thus he speaks to him: "I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars. And hast borne and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored and hast not fainted. Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee; because thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen: and repent and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." The greatest part of interpreters think that these reproaches do not so much concern the person of Timothy, as that of some members of his church, whose zeal was grown cool. But others are persuaded that they may be applied to Timothy himself, who made ample amends, by the martyrdom which he suffered, for the reproaches mentioned by St. John in this place. It is supposed that Timothy had Onesimus for his successor.

TITUS.

Titus was a Gentile by religion and birth, but converted by St. Paul, who calls him his son. St. Jerome says that he was St. Paul's interpreter: and that, probably, because he might write what St. Paul dictated, or explained in Latin what this apostle said in Greek; or rendered into Greek what St. Paul said in Hebrew or Syriac. St. Paul took him with him to Jerusalem, when he went thither in the year 51 of the vulgar æra, about deciding the question which was then started, whether the converted Gentiles ought to be made subject to the ceremonies of the law? Some would then have obliged him to circumcise Titus; but neither he nor Titus would consent to it. Titus was sent by the same apostle to Corinth, upon occasion of some disputes which then divided the church. He was very well received by the Corinthians, and very much satisfied with their ready compliance: but would receive nothing from them, imitating thereby the disinterestedness of his master.

From hence he went to St. Paul in Macedonia, and gave him an account of the state of the church at Corinth. A little while after, the apostle desired him to return again to Corinth, to set things in order preparatory to his coming. Titus readily under-

ook this journey, and departed immediately, carrying with him St. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. Titus was made bishop of the Isle of Crete, about the 63d year of Christ, when St. Paul was obliged to quit that island, in order to take care of the other churches. The following year he wrote to him, to desire that as soon as he should have sent Tychicus or Artemas to him for supplying his place in Crete, Titus would come to him to Nicopolis in Macedonia, or to Nicopolis in Epirus, upon the Gulf of Ambracia, where the apostle intended to pass his winter.

The subject of this epistle is to represent to Titus what are the qualities that a bishop should be endued with. As the principal function which Titus was to exercise in the Isle of Crete was to ordain priests and bishops, it was highly incumbent on him to make a discreet choice. The apostle also gives him a sketch for the advice and instructions which he was to propound to all sorts of persons; to the aged, both men and women; to young people of each sex: to slaves or servants. He exhorts him to keep a strict authority over the Cretans; and to reprove them with severity, as being a people addicted to lying, wickedness, idleness, and gluttony. And as many converted Jews were in the churches of Crete, he exhorts Titus to oppose their vain traditions and Jewish fables: and at the same time to show them that the observation of the legal ceremonies is no longer necessary; that the distinction of meat is now abolished; and that every thing is pure and clean to those who are so themselves: he puts him in mind of exhorting the faithful to be obedient to temporal power; to avoid disputes, quarrels, and slander; to apply themselves to honest callings; and to shun the company of an heretic, after the first and second admonition.

The epistle to Titus has always been acknowledged by the church. The Marcionites did not receive it, nor did the Barsilidians, and some other heretics; but Titian, the head of the Encratics, received it, and preferred it before all the rest. It is not certainly known from what place it was written, nor by whom it was sent.

Titus was deputed to preach the Gospel in Dalmatia; and he was still there in the year 65, when the apostle wrote his second epistle to Timothy. He afterwards returned into Crete; from whence it is said he propagated the Gospel into the neighboring islands. He died at the age of 94, and was buried in Crete. We are assured that the cathedral of the city of Candia is dedicated to his name; and that his head is preserved there entire. The Greeks keep his festival on the 25th of August, and the Latins on the 4th of January.

THE VIRGIN MARY.

As we are taught by the predictions of the prophets, that a virgin was to be the mother of the promised Messiah, so we are assured by the unanimous concurrence of the evangelists, that this virgin's name was Mary, the daughter of Joachim and Anna, of the tribe of Judah; and married to Joseph of the same tribe. The scripture, indeed, tells us no more of the blessed virgin's parents, than that she was of the family of David.

What is said concerning the birth of Mary and her parents is to be found only in some apocryphal writings; but which, however, are very ancient. St. John says, that Mary the wife of Cleophas was the virgin's sister Mary, that was of the royal race of David. She was allied likewise to the family of Aaron, since Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias, the mother of John the Baptist, was her cousin.

Not to build upon uncertainties, thus much we are assured by the testimony of an angel, that she was happy above all other women, in the divine favor; that she was full of grace; and that the Lord was with her in a peculiar manner.

For since the Son of God, in order to become a man, and to dwell among us, was obliged to take a human body from some woman, it was agreeable to his infinite wisdom that he should choose for this purpose one whose endowments of body and mind were most holy and pious; who excelled the rest of her sex in chaste and virtuous disposition; and who, in short, was a repository of all the divine graces.

The excesses of that devotion which has been paid to the blessed virgin, and the legendary tales of monks, cannot in reason blemish her real excellencies, no more than the idolatries of the pagans can obscure the light of the sun which is deified. After all the abuses of superstition or profaneness, the extremes of honor and dishonor, there will ever be a very high esteem and veneration due to the mother of the blessed Jesus.

That the mother of our Lord, notwithstanding her marriage, was even in that state to remain a pure virgin, and to conceive Christ in a miraculous manner, is the clear doctrine of the holy scriptures. "Behold," says Isaiah, in chapter vii. prophesying of this mysterious incarnation, "a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son." The Hebrew word *Almah* most properly signifies a virgin; and so it is translated here by all the ancient interpreters; and never once used in the scriptures in any other

sense, as several learned men have proved against the particular pretensions of the modern Jews. It primarily signifies "hidden," or "concealed;" whence it is used to denote a virgin, because of the custom in the eastern countries of keeping such concealed from the view of men, never suffering them to stir out of the women's apartments.

Though we cannot doubt but that God, who ordained this mystery, provided for all circumstances requisite to its accomplishment; yet we may consider which way a decorum was preserved in this case by marriage. St. Matthew says, "The virgin was espoused to Joseph; and that before they came together, she was found to be with child of the Holy Ghost." Whence we may conclude that it was not a constant custom for the bride to go and live at the bridegroom's house immediately upon her being affianced to him.

Notwithstanding the various circumstances relating to this affair, as told us in apocryphal books, are not to be relied on as certain; yet, however, Mary's resolution of continency, even in a married state, cannot be called in question, since her virginity is attested by the Gospel; and that herself, speaking to the Angel, who declared to her that she should become the mother of a son, told him, "That she knew not a man," or that she lived in continency with her husband. For which reason, when Joseph perceived her pregnancy, he was at first so exceedingly surprised and scandalized at it, that he resolved to put her away, but secretly, without making any noise, and without observing the common formalities: for he knew the mutual resolutions they had agreed to, of being in continence, though in a state of marriage.

The virgin Mary then being espoused, or married, to Joseph, the angel Gabriel appeared to her, in order to acquaint her, that she should become the mother of the Messiah. Mary asked him how that could be, since she knew no man. To which the angel replied, that the Holy Ghost should come upon her, and the power of the Highest should overshadow her; so that she should conceive without the concurrence of any man. And to confirm what he had said to her, and show that nothing is impossible to God, he added, that her cousin Elizabeth, who was old, and had been barren, was then in the sixth month of her pregnancy. Mary answered him, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word." And by the miraculous power of the Holy Ghost, she presently conceived the Son of God, the true Emanuel, that is to say, "God with us." Whether the holy virgin, immediately after the annunciation, went up to the passover at Jerusalem (as some have imagined, this being the season of the year for it) or not, we have no account from the Evangelist St. Luke;

but this he assures us, that a little while after she set out for Hebron, a city in the mountains of Judah, in order to visit her cousin Elizabeth, to congratulate her upon her pregnancy, which she had learned from the angel, at an age when such a blessing was not usually to be expected; and no sooner had she entered the house and began to speak, than upon Elizabeth's hearing the voice of Mary's salutation, her child, young John the Baptist, transported with supernatural emotions of joy, leaped in her womb. Whereupon she was filled with the Holy Ghost; and being, by divine inspiration, acquainted with the mystery of the incarnation, she saluted Mary, and cried out, "Blessed art thou amongst women; and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For lo! as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed, for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord." Then Mary, filled with acknowledgments and supernatural light, praised God, saying, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour," &c. as we find it in the hymn called Magnificat.

After Mary had continued here about three months, till Elizabeth was delivered (as St. Ambrose thinks, that she might see him on whose account she principally made the visit) she then returned to her own house.

When she was ready to be delivered, an edict was published by Cæsar Augustus, in the year of the world 4000, the first of Christ, and the third before the vulgar era, which decreed, that all the subjects of the Roman empire should go to their respective cities and places, and there have their names registered according to their families. Thus Joseph and Mary, who were both of the lineage of David, repaired to the city of Bethlehem, the original and native place of their family. But while they were in the city, the time being fulfilled in which Mary was to be delivered, she brought forth her first-born son, wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger of the stable or cavern whither they had retired; for they could find no place in the public inn, because of the great concourse of people that were then at Bethlehem on the same occasion; or they were forced to withdraw into the stable of the inn, not being able to get a more convenient place for her to be delivered.

The Greek fathers generally agree that the place of Christ's birth was a cavern. Justin and Eusebius place it out of the city, but in the neighborhood; and St. Jerome says, it was at the extremity of the city, towards the south. It was commonly believed that the Virgin brought forth Jesus the night after her

arrival at Bethlehem, or on the 25th of December. Such is the ancient tradition of the church. The fathers inform us that Mary brought forth Jesus Christ without pain, and without the assistance of any midwife: because she had conceived him without concupiscence; and that neither she, nor the fruit she brought forth had any share in the curse pronounced against Adam and Eve.

At the same time the angels made the birth of Christ known to the shepherds, who were in the fields near Bethlehem; and who came in the night to see Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger, in order to pay him their tribute of adoration. Mary took notice of all these things, and laid them up in her heart. Some time after came the Magi, or wise men, from the East, and brought to Jesus the mysterious presents of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, having been directed thither by a star which led the way before them, to the very place where the babe lay. After this, being warned by an angel that appeared to them in a dream, they returned into their own country by a way different from that by which they came, without giving Herod the intelligence he wanted: which he pretended was in order to come and worship the babe, though his real design was to cut him off, from a jealousy of his rivalling him in hi kingdom.

But the time of Mary's purification being come, that is, forty days after the birth of Jesus, she went to Jerusalem in order to present her son in the temple; and there to offer the sacrifice appointed by the law, for the purification of women after childbirth. At that time there was at Jerusalem an old man, named Simeon, who was full of the Holy Ghost, and had received a secret assurance that he should not die before he had seen Christ the Lord. Accordingly, he came into the temple by the impulse of the Spirit of God, and taking the little Jesus in his arms, he blessed the Lord; and then addressing himself to Mary, said, "This child is set for the rising and falling of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against you; even so far that thy own soul shall be pierced as with a sword, that the secret thoughts in the hearts of many may be discovered."

Afterwards, when Joseph and Mary were preparing to return to their own country of Nazareth, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, bidding him to retire into Egypt with Mary, and the child, because Herod had a design to destroy Jesus. Joseph obeyed the admonition, and continued in Egypt till after the death of Herod: when both he and Mary returned to Nazareth, not daring to go to Bethlehem, because it was the jurisdiction of Archelaus, the son and successor of Herod the Great.

Joseph and Mary went every year to Jerusalem to the feast of the passover: and when Jesus was twelve years of age, they brought him with them to the capital. When the days of the festival were ended, they set out on their return home: but the child Jesus continued at Jerusalem, without their perceiving it; and thinking that he might be with some of the company, they went on a day's journey; when not finding him among their acquaintance, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking for him. Three days after, they found him in the temple, sitting among the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions. When they saw him, they were filled with astonishment; and Mary said to him, My son, why have you served us thus? Behold your father and myself, who have sought you in great affliction. Jesus answered them, Why did you seek me? did not you know that I must be employed about my father's business? Afterwards he returned with them to Nazareth, and lived in filial submission to them; but his mother laid up all these things in her heart. The Gospel says nothing more of the Virgin Mary, till the marriage in Cana of Galilee, where she was present, with her son Jesus.

In process of time, according to the divine appointment respecting his mission, our Saviour resolved to manifest himself to the world, and therefore went to the baptism of St. John, from thence into the wilderness, and thence to the before-mentioned wedding, to which he, with his mother and disciples, had been invited. At this entertainment the provision of wine being somewhat scanty, (probably because the friends of the married couple were but mean,) Christ's mother told her son they had no wine, not doubting of his power to supply them: to which Jesus answered in terms which had some appearance of a rebuke, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." St. Chrysostom, and the followers of him in his explications, impute what was said by the holy Virgin to some motive of vanity, and that she was tempted by a desire of seeing her own credit raised by the miracles of her son; but the other fathers and commentators ascribe it to her charity and compassion towards these poor people. And it is thought that Christ's answer was intended for more general use than the present occasion; namely, to teach us to wait God's time of doing his own works; and certainly our Lord designed no affront to his mother, to whom he always paid a pious and filial reverence. This answer is imputed by the said fathers and commentators to Jesus, not as man; but to Jesus, as the Son of God. In this respect he says to Mary, What have I to do with thee? I know when I ought to show forth my power; nor does it belong to you to appoint me the time of working miracles; since the proper time for this has not yet begun; and further intima-

ting, that when it did, these were not to be wrought out of any private, partial, and civil views, but in pursuance of that great end which he had in charge, the conversion and salvation of mankind. And so his mother understood him, receiving the answer with meekness, and charging the servants to attend him, and do whatever he commanded them.

There being in the room six great stone pitchers, Jesus ordered them to be filled brim-full of water; and afterwards commanded the servants to draw out and carry it to the master of the feast, who, on tasting, found it was excellent wine. And this is the first miracle Jesus wrought at the beginning of his public ministry.

From hence our Lord went to Capernaum with his mother and brethren; that is, with his relations and disciples, in order, as St. Chrysostom thinks, to fix the Virgin Mary in a settled habitation, while he travelled about the country in the exercise of his ministry; and this, indeed, seems to be the place where the holy Virgin afterwards principally resided. St. Epiphanius, on the contrary, believed that she followed him every where, during the whole time of his preaching; though we do not find that the Evangelists make any mention of her when they speak of several holy women of Galilee, who followed him and ministered to his necessities.

The Gospel informs us that as our blessed Saviour, in the course of his travels for the fulfilment of his divine mission, was on a certain day teaching in a house at Capernaum, so great a crowd of people stood about him that neither he nor his disciples had time to take any refreshment, which caused a report to be spread abroad, that he had fainted away. It was not the multitude who raised and circulated this false report, but the ignorant and malicious scribes and pharisees, who were ever devising such methods as their malicious dispositions could project to lessen the character and reputation of the blessed Jesus, and to prepossess the minds of the people against the doctrines he preached and taught. It was from this view they raised so unjust a report, and which occasioned some confusion and interruption for a time; but, it was soon discovered to be false, the tumult appeased, and the enemies of our Lord looked upon by the people with that contempt they deserved.

The mother of Jesus and his brethren, as it was natural for them, upon hearing such a report, came instantly to seek him, and endeavored to take him out of the crowd, in order to give him all the relief in their power. But when they could not get into the house for the throngs of people, they caused a message to be conveyed from one to another, till it was told Jesus "that his mother and his brethren were at the door, and desired to speak with him." Jesus being accordingly informed of their

coming, and that they waited to speak to him, being at that instant engaged in the work of his ministry, preaching the word of God, he asked this question: Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? and looking upon those that were around about him, he said, These are my mother and brethren; declaring, "That whosoever did the will of his heavenly Father, the same was his mother, and sister, and brother." This was what Christ hath taught in another place, that we must prefer God to all human relations, and give the preference to his service. But this saying could not reflect upon his mother, who was among the principal of those who did the will of his heavenly Father. Immediately upon her approach, a woman of the company said with a loud voice, directing her words to Jesus, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked." To which he replied, "Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." Not intimating hereby that she who had the honor to bear him did not deserve to be called blessed throughout all generations; but that even her happiness consisted more in doing the will of Christ, than in giving him a human body.

From this time we have no further account of the holy Virgin, till we find her in Jerusalem at the last passover our Saviour celebrated in that city. Here she saw all that was transacted against him, followed him to Mount Calvary, and stayed at the foot of the cross during the passion of her blessed Son. We cannot doubt that her soul was at this time pierced through, as old Simeon prophesied, with the most acute pains for the death of such a Son. Yet her constancy was remarkable; for when the apostles were frightened away from their Master, she with a courage undaunted and worthy of the mother of Christ, continued even in the midst of the executioners, being prepared to die with her son.

On this melancholy occasion we cannot but suppose the holy Virgin to have been affected with sentiments fit for one who had so miraculously conceived, and so carefully observed and laid up in her mind all occurrences that related to the Son of God.

Our blessed Lord, who came to set us a pattern of all virtue through the whole course of his life, was pleased, in these last moments, to teach us that in what circumstances soever we are, we must never cast off that love and care which God's law obliges us to have for those who gave us life. Being now ready to leave the world, and seeing his own mother at the foot of the cross, and his beloved disciple, St. John, near her, he bequeathed her to him by his last will and testament, saying to his mother, "Woman, behold thy son." And to the disciple,

"Behold thy mother; and from that hour the disciple took her home to his own house."

It is not to be doubted but that our Saviour appeared to his holy mother immediately after his resurrection, and that she was the first, or at least one of the first, to whom he vouchsafed this great consolation.

St. Luke acquaints us, in the first chapter of the Acts, that the Virgin Mary was with the apostles and others, and continued with them when assembled at Jerusalem after his ascension, waiting for the descent of the Holy Ghost; and it is probable that from her they learned the whole history of our Lord's private life before his baptism; though St. Chrysostom will have them to be taught it by revelation. After this she dwelt in the house of St. John the Evangelist, who took care of her as of his own mother. It is thought that he took her along with him to Ephesus, where she continued some time, and there is a letter of the council of Ephesus, importing, that in the fifth century it was believed she was buried there.

Yet this opinion was not so universally received but that some authors of the same age think the Virgin Mary died and was buried at Jerusalem: or rather in her sepulchre at Gethsemane, near that city, where to this day it is shown in a magnificent church dedicated to her name.

Epiphanius, the most learned father of the fourth century, declares he could not tell whether she died a natural death, or by martyrdom: or whether she was buried or not. "None (says he) knows any thing of her decease; but that it was glorious cannot be doubted. That body which was perfectly chaste and pure must enjoy a happiness worthy of her through whom the Son of Righteousness arose and shone upon the world."

A learned writer has added to the before-cited passage of the council of Ephesus, another remark from their act: "That the cathedral church of Ephesus was dedicated under the name of the Virgin Mary; and that we find no other church of her name at that time in any approved author." For though the holy Virgin was always held in great veneration, yet it was not the custom of the first ages to give the name of any saint to a church, except they had some of the relics, or built it in the place where such a saint was martyred; or for some reason of the like nature.

The sentiments of the Roman church are, that she is dead; but they are divided as to her having risen again: or whether she stays for the general resurrection at Ephesus, Jerusalem, or any other place.

With regard to the age at which she died, and the precise year of her death it is needless to trouble ourselves about this

inquiry; since nothing can be said on these matters but what is very doubtful: and they cannot be fixed but at random. Nicephorus Callistus, and those who have followed him, give no proof of what they advance on this subject, and therefore deserve no credit. Nor shall we build upon the description of the holy Virgin given us by the same author, who says, that she was of a moderate stature; or according to some, a little belowthe ordinary stature of women; that her complexion was of the color of wheat, her hair fair, her eyes lively, the eyeballs yellowish, or olive-colored, her eye-brows black and semi-circular, her nose pretty long, her lips red, her hands and fingers large, her air grave, simple, and modest, her clothes neat, without any pride and ostentation, and of the natural color of the wool. It has been said that St. Luke drew her picture; and in several places are shown pictures of her, which, it is affirmed, are copies from the original by St. Luke.

The above-mentioned Nicephorus Callistus, an author of the 14th century, is the first who has spoken of this in a positive manner; but Theodorus, lecturer of the church of Constantinople, who lived in the sixth century, says, that Eudocia sent from Jerusalem to Constantinople to the empress Pulcheria, a picture of the holy Virgin painted by St. Luke. But we need be in no great pain about this, since the true images of saints are the ideas of their virtues, which we should form in our minds, and express by our actions.

Certain it is, that this Holy Evangelist has acquainted us with some particulars of the life of the holy Virgin, that could hardly be learned from any one but herself; which may incline us to believe that he had the happiness of her acquaintance, and a tolerable share of her confidence.

With regard to her character, we shall only mention in general, that common remark which the Evangelists make, that she was more disposed to think than to speak; and observed the extraordinary things which were said of her son in silence; or, as they express it, "she pondered them in her heart."

MARY, THE SISTER OF LAZARUS.

THIS holy woman had been preposterously confounded with the sinful person who sat at the feet of the blessed Jesus weeping, while he was at meat in the house of Simon the leper, (see Luke vii. 37. 39.) Who this sinner was is unknown; some will have her to be Mary Magdalene; but this opinion has nothing more than conjecture for its basis.

But whoever that sinner was, she was a very different person from Mary the sister of Lazarus, who, with her sister Martha, lived with her brother at Bethany, a village near Jerusalem. The blessed Jesus had a particular affection for this family, and often retired to their house with his disciples. One day, and perhaps the first time that Jesus went thither, Martha received him with remarkable affection, and took the greatest pains in providing a proper entertainment for him: but Mary her sister continued sitting at our Saviour's feet, listening to his words with peculiar attention. This Martha considered as an instance of disrespect, and therefore said to Jesus, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me." But the blessed Jesus justified Mary, by telling her sister, that she had chosen the better part, which should not be taken from her.

Some time after, their brother Lazarus fell sick, and his sisters sent to acquaint Jesus of the misfortune; but he did not arrive at Bethany till after Lazarus was dead. Martha, hearing Jesus was come into the neighborhood, went and told him, that if he had not been absent her brother had been still alive. Jesus promised her that her brother should rise again. To which Martha answered, "I know that he shall rise again at the last day." Jesus replied, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die. Believest thou this?" Martha answered, "Yea Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ the Son of God, which should come into the world."

Having said this, she departed, and gave her sister notice privately that Jesus was come. Mary, as soon as she heard the welcome tidings, arose and went to Jesus; and, as Martha had done before her, said, "Lord if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." The blessed Jesus was greatly moved at the pathetic complaints of these two worthy sisters, and on

asking where they had buried him, they conducted him to the sepulchre.

On his arrival at the place where the body of Lazarus was deposited, the great Redeemer of mankind groaned deeply in his spirit; he wept, he prayed to his Father, and then cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." The dead obeyed the voice of the Son of God; Lazarus immediately revived, and Jesus restored him to his sisters.

After performing this stupendous miracle, Jesus departed from the neighborhood of Jerusalem, and did not return thither till some days before the passover. Six days before that festival, Jesus came again to Bethany with his disciples, and was invited to a supper at the house of Simon the leper. Martha attended, and Lazarus was one of the guests.

During the supper, Mary, to express her gratitude, took a pound of spikenard, a very precious perfume, and poured it on the head and feet of Jesus, wiping his feet with the hair of her head; and the whole house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Judas Iscariot was highly offended at this generous action; but his Master vindicated Mary, and told him, that by this she had prevented his embalment, signifying that his death and burial were at hand.

After this we have no account of Mary, the sister of Lazarus, in the sacred writings. Several authors, indeed, by not distinguishing properly between Mary the sister of Martha, and Mary Magdalene, say, that she was present at the crucifixion of the great Redeemer of mankind; and also that both she and her sister accompanied the women who went to embalm the body. This is not, indeed, improbable; but it is certain neither of them are particularly mentioned by the evangelists. The ancient Latins believed, and the Greeks are of the same opinion, that both Martha and Mary continued at Jerusalem, and died there; and several ancient Martyrologists place their feast on the nineteenth of January.

JOSEPH.

Joseph, or Joses, was the son of Mary Cleophas, brother to St. James the Less, and a near relation to the blessed Jesus, according to the flesh: being the son of Mary, the holy Virgin's

sister, and Cleophas, who was Joseph's brother, or son to Joseph himself, as several of the ancients suppose: who have asserted that Joseph was married to Mary Cleophas, or Escha, before he was married to the holy Virgin. Some believe Joseph the son of Mary Cleophas, to be the same with Joseph Barsabas, surnamed the Just, who is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, and was proposed, with St. Matthias, to fill up the traitor Judas' place; but in this there is no certainty. We learn nothing particular in Scripture concerning Joseph, the brother of our Lord. If he was one of those among his near kinsmen who did not believe in him, when they would have persuaded him to go to the feast of the tabernacles some months before our Saviour's death, it is probable that he was afterwards converted; for it is intimated in Scripture, that at last all our Saviour's brethren believed in him; and St. Chrysostom says, that they were signalized for the eminence of their faith and virtue.

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA.

Joseph of Arimathea, or of Ranatha, Rama or Ramula, a city between Joppa and Jerusalem, was a Jewish senator, and privately a disciple of Jesus Christ: he was not consenting to the designs of the rest of the Jews, particularly the members of the Sanhedrim, who condemned and put Jesus to death; and when our Saviour was dead, he went boldly to Pilate, and desired the body of Jesus in order to bury it. This he obtained, and accordingly buried it after an honorable manner in a sepulchre newly made in a garden; which was upon the same Mount Calvary where Jesus had been crucified. After he had placed it there, he closed the entrance of it with a stone cut particularly for this purpose, and which exactly filled the open part of it.

The Greek church keeps the festival of Joseph of Arimathea, July the 31st.

We do not meet with his name in the old Latin Martyrologies; nor was it inserted in the Roman till after the year 1585. The body of Joseph of Arimathea was, it is said, brought to the abbey of Moyenmontier by Fortunatus, archbishop of Grada; to which Charlemagne had given this monastery under the denomi

nation of a benefice. His remains were honored till the tenth age: but then the monastery being given to canons, who continued seventy years there, the relics were carried away by some foreign monks, and so lost with many others.

NICODEMUS.

Nicodemus, one of the disciples of our blessed Saviour, was a Jew by nation, and by sect a pharisee. The Gospel calls him a Ruler of the Jews; and Christ gives him the name of a Master of Israel. When our Saviour began to manifest himself by his miracles, at Jerusalem, at the first passover which he celebrated there after his baptism, Nicodemus made no doubt but that he was the Messiah, and came to him by night, that he might learn of him the way of salvation. Jesus told him, that no one could see the kingdom of heaven, except he should be born again. Nicodemus taking this in the literal sense, made answer, How can a man be born again? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb? To which Jesus replied, If a man be not born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit. Nicodemus asked him, How can these things be? Jesus answered: "Art thou a master of Israel, and ignorant of these things? We tell you what you know, and you receive not our testimony. If you believe not common things, and which may be called earthly, how will you believe me if I speak to you of heavenly things? And as Moses lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up on high: for God has so loved the world that he has given his only Son; so that no man who believes in him shall perish, but shall have eternal life; for God sent his Son into the world, that the world through him might be saved."

After this conversation, Nicodemus became a disciple of Jesus Christ; and there is no doubt to be made but he came to hear him as often as our Saviour came to Jerusalem. It happened on a time, that the priests and pharisees had sent officers to seize Jesus, who returned to them, and made this report, that never man spoke as he did; to which the pharisees replied, "Are you also of his disciples? Is there any one of the elders

or pharisees that have believed in him?" Then Nicodemus thought himself obliged to make answer, saying, "Does the law permit us to condemn any one before he is heard?" To which they replied, "Are you also a Galilean? Read the scriptures, and you will find that never any prophet came out of Galilee." After this the council was dismissed. At last Nicodemus declared himself openly a disciple of Jesus Christ, when he came with Joseph of Arimathea to pay the last duties to the body of Christ crucified: which they took down from the cross, embalmed and laid in the sepulchre.

Nicodemus received baptism from the disciples of Christ; but it is uncertain whether before or after his passion.

The Jews being informed of this, deposed him from his dignity of senator, excommunicated and drove him from Jerusalem. It is said also, that they would have put him to death; but that in consideration of Gamaliel, who was his uncle, or cousin-german, they contented themselves with beating him almost to death, and plundering his goods.

Gamaliel conveyed him to his country house, and provided him with what was necessary for his support; and when he died, Gamaliel buried him honorably near St. Stephen.

His body was discovered in 415, together with those of St. Stephen and Gamaliel; and the Latin church pays honor to all three on the third of August.

JOHN MARK.

John Mark, cousin to St. Barnabas, and a disciple of his, was the son of a Christian woman, named Mary, who had a house in Jerusalem, where the apostles and the faithful generally used to meet. Here they were at prayers in the night, when St. Peter, who was delivered out of prison by the angel, came and knocked at the door: and in this house the celebrated church of Sion was said to have been afterwards established.

John Mark, whom some very improperly confound with the Evangelist St. Mark, adhered to St. Paul and St. Barnabas, and followed them in their return to Antioch: he continued in their company and service till they came to Perga, in Pamphylia, but then seeing that they were undertaking a longer

journey, he left them, and returned to Jerusalem. This happened in the year 45 of the common era.

Some years after, that is to say in the year 51, Paul and Barnabas preparing to return into Asia, in order to visit the churches which they had formed there, Barnabas was of opinion that John Mark should accompany them in this journey; but Paul would not consent to it: upon which occasion these two apostles separated. Paul went to Asia, and Barnabas, with John Mark, to the Isle of Cyprus. What John Mark did after this journey we do not know, till we find him at Rome in the year 63, performing signal service for St. Paul during his imprisoment.

The apostle speaks advantageously of him in his Epistle to the Colossians: "Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, saluteth you. If he cometh unto you, receive him." He makes mention of him again in his epistle to Philemon, written in the year 62, at which time he was with St. Paul at Rome; but in the year 65 he was with Timothy in Asia. And St. Paul writing to Timothy, desires him to bring Marcus to Rome; adding that he was useful to him in the ministry of the Gospel.

In the Greek and Latin churches, the festival of John Mark is kept on the 27th of September. Some say that he was bishop of Biblis, in Phœnicia. The Greeks give him the title of apostle; and say that the sick were cured by his shadow only. It is very probable that he died at Ephesus, where his tomb was very much celebrated and resorted to. He is sometimes called simply John or Mark. The year of his death we are strangers to; and shall not collect all that is said of him in apocryphal and uncertain authors.

CLEMENT.

Clement is mentioned by St. Paul, in his epistile to the Philippians, where the apostle says that Clement's name is written in the book of life. The generality of the fathers, and other interpreters, make no question but that this is the same Clement who succeeded St. Peter after Linus and Cletus, in the government of the church of Rome; and this seems to be intimated, when in the office of St. Clement's day, that church appoints this part of the epistle to the Philippians to be read.

We find several things relating to Clement's life in the recognitions and constitutions called apostolical; but as those works are not looked upon as authentic, though there may be truths in them derived from the tradition of the first ages, little stress is to be laid upon their testimony. St. Chrysostom thinks that Clement, mentioned by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Philippians, was one of the apostle's constant fellow-travellers. Irenæus, Origen, Clemens of Alexandria, and others of the ancients assert that Clement was a disciple of the apostle; that he had seen them, and heard their instructions. St. Epiphanius, Jerome, Rufinus, Bede, and some others, were of opinion, that as the apostles St. Peter and St. Paul could not be continually at Rome, by reason of the frequent journeys which they were obliged to make to other places, and it was not proper that the city of Rome, should be without a bishop, there was a necessity to supply the want of them by establishing Linus, Anaclet, and Clement there. The constitutions inform us, that Linus was ordained by St. Paul; Tertullian and Epiphanius say, that St. Peter ordained Clement. Rufinus tells us, that this apostle chose St. Clement for his successor. But Epiphanius believes, that after be had been made bishop of Rome by St. Peter, he refused to exercise his office, till, after the death of Linus and Anaclet, he was obliged to take upon himself the care of the church; and this is the most generally received opinion. St. Peter's immediate successor was Linus: Linus was succeeded by Anacletus: and Anacletus by Clement, in the year of Christ 91, which was the tenth of Domitian's reign.

During his pontificate, the church of Corinth having been disturbed by a spirit of division, St. Clement wrote a large letter to the Corinthians, which is still extant, and was so much esteemed by the ancients, that they read it publicly in many churches; and some have been inclined to range it among the canonical writers. The emperor Domitian intended to declare war against the church of Christ: his design was made known to Hermas, and he ordered to give a copy of it to Clement, that he might communicate it to other churches, and exhort them to provide against the storm. We have no certain account of what happened to St. Clement, during this persecution: but we are very well assured that he lived to the third year of Trajan. His festival is set down by Bede, and all the Latin Martyrologies, on the twenty-third of November. The Greeks honor him on the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth of the same month. Rufinus, and pope Zozimus, give him the title of Martyr; and the Roman church, in its canon, places him among the saints who have sacrificed their lives for Jesus Christ. We read in an ancient history, to the authenticity of

which, however, there are some exceptions, that St. Clement was banished by Trajan to the Chersonesus, beyond the Euxine Sea: besides other particulars in his history which we shall not mention, as not being well authenticated.

MARY MAGDALENE.

Mary Magdalene was a native either of Magdala, a town in Galilee, on the other side of Jordan, or Magdalos, a town situated at the foot of Mount Carmel, and had her surname from the place of her birth. Some will have it that she was the sinner mentioned by St. Luke, chap. vii. 37, &c., but this opinion is built only on conjecture. The Evangelists Luke and Mark tell us, that Jesus had cast out of her seven devils; which some understand in a literal, and others in a figurative sense.

But however this be, she became a constant attendant on the blessed Jesus, after he had removed her plague. She followed him to Mount Calvary, continued amidst the Roman guards at the foot of the cross, with the Holy Virgin, and saw his precious body laid in the tomb. After which she returned to Jerusalem, to purchase spices to embalm him, as soon as the sabbath was over.

It was she who carried the welcome tidings to Peter and John; and to her our blessed Lord himself first appeared after his resurrection. The apostles did not, however, believe her report till it was confirmed by others, and they themselves had seen the Saviour of the world.

We have no further account of Mary Magdalene in the sacred writings. But Modestus, archbishop of Constantinople in the seventh century, tells us, that she continued at Jerusalem till the death of the Holy Virgin, after which she retired to Ephesus, and resided with St. John till she sealed the faith she had so long professed with her blood. She was buried by the Christians at Ephesus, where her tomb was shown in the seventh century.

But the emperor, Leo the Wise, caused her body to be removed from Ephesus to Constantinople, the latter end of the ninth century, in order to its being interred in the church erected to the honor of the apostles.

Thus have we given the fullest account of the followers of the blessed Jesus; the persons who spread the light of the Gospel over the whole world, removed the veil of ignorance and superstition drawn over the kingdoms of the earth, and taught us the method of attaining eternal happiness in the courts of the New Jerusalem.

May we all follow their glorious example! May we imitate their faith, their piety, their charity, and their love! Then shall we pass "through things temporal, in such a manner, that we shall finally gain the things eternal," and through the merits of an all-perfect Redeemer, be admitted as worthy guests at the marriage-supper of the Lamb.

THE

HISTORY OF THE JEWS.

An Account of the Troubles of the Jews, particularly those Calamities which fell upon them at the time of the Destruction of Jerusalem.

As the history on which we are now about to enter is uncommonly interesting, there is a peculiar propriety in our recapitulating such circumstances as may be necessary for our more-perfect understanding of it. The reader will easily recollect, that from the time of Judas Maccabeus, the Jewish nation was governed by the Asmonean family, who united the sanctity of the priesthood with the authority of the chief magistrate, till, in consequence of domestic dissensions, they were reduced to a state of subjection to the Roman republic, an event which took place in the sixty-third year before the Christian era. They still, however, retained some shadow of royalty till the year A. C. 37, when Jerusalem was taken by Herod, and Antigonus, the last of the Asmonean race, committed to a close imprisonment. The reign of Herod, splendid, vigorous, and bloody, continued till a little after the birth of Christ, that is, about three years before the commencement of the common account.

Herod had nine wives; the first of whom, named Doris, was the mother of Antipater, who is stigmatized as the worst of all Herod's sons, and was put to death for treason during the last sickness of his father. The second of them was Mariamne, the daughter of Simon, the high-priest. By this excellent princess he had a son, whom Josephus names Herod, and Luke, Philip, the husband of that Herodias on whose account John the Baptist was beheaded. The third, who was his brother's daughter, and the fourth, who was his first cousin, both of them died childless. The fifth wife was Martac, a Samaritan, by whom he had Archelaus and Antipas: the former succeeded him in the half of the kingdom, under the name of Tetrarch; and the latter called also Philip, was Tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis,

and married Salome, the daughter of Herodias, who demanded the head of John the Baptist as the reward of her dancing.—This Prince died without issue. Herod's sixth wife, Cleopatra, who was a native of Jerusalem, had two sons, Herod Antipas and Philip. Herod Antipas was he that married Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, ordered the execution of John, and commanded his soldiers to insult our Saviour. Pallas, the seventh wife, had a son named Phasael. The eighth was Phædra, by whom he had only one daughter named Roxana. And by the last, called Elpis, he had another daughter called Salome.

Aristobulus, the son of the beloved Mariamne, left two sons, Agrippa, who is in the Acts called Herod, and noted as the persecutor of the Christians; Herod, king of Chalais, a province of Syria; and a daughter named Herodias. Agrippa was the father of that king Agrippa before whom Paul pleaded, his sister Bernice, and Drusilla, the wife of Felix.

It has been already mentioned that the land of Israel was now considered as an appendage of Syria, and divided into four parts, called Tetrarchies. Of these, Herod Antipas governed Galilee and Perea, or the country beyond Jordan. Philip, the son of Martac, occupied Iturea and Trachonitis, a rocky country, which afforded great shelter to robbers. Lysanias was Tetrarch of Abilene; and Pontius Pilate was the procurator, or Roman governor of Judea.

The government of Pilate appears to have been uncommonly bloody and oppressive; yet, as Dr. Lardner observes, that they had, according to the sacred writers, the free exercise of their religion, is evident from the whole tenor of the history contained in the Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles; they had their synagogues; the law and the prophets were read there; our Saviour taught in the synagogues; whenever he healed any lepers, he bade them go and show themselves to the priests and offer the gifts that Moses commanded.

The Jews were, at this time, divided into several sects, among which, the most distinguished were the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes.

The Pharisees are generally supposed to have derived their name from a Chaldaic word, which signifies to separate, because they separated themselves from the rest of the Jews, leading a more austere life, and professing a greater degree of holiness, and more religious observation of the law. They paid great deference to their elders, whom they never presumed to contradict, and possessed a high reputation on account of their supposed equity, temperance and wisdom. They held that fate governed all things, but not in so absolute a manner as to exclude the operations of the human will: that the soul was immortal, and reserved for a future state of rewards and punish-

ments. Most of the Jews of the present day, adhere to the Pharisaic doctrine, though they do not generally praise their extreme austerity of life.

The Sadducees generally consisted of persons of the greatest opulence and distinction; and though they attended on the temple worship, were generally considered as a kind of deists or free-thinkers. They accustomed themselves to investigate every thing, and dispute freely with their teachers. He says, that when they were advanced to public offices, they were obliged to conduct themselves as Pharisees, in order to secure the favor of the people.

The Essenes were less ambitious of public distinction than either of the other sects, and, in consequence, are not mentioned in the New Testament.

The critics and commentators upon the New Testament are much divided with regard to the Herodians, some making them to be a political party, and others a religious sect. The former opinion is favored by the author of the Syriac version, who calls them the domestics of Herod; and also by Josephus, who passes them over in silence, though he professes to give an account of the several religious sects of the Jews.

Directly opposed to the Herodians were the Galileans, who are considered by Josephus as the fourth Jewish sect. They derived their origin from a bloody insurgent, Judas of Galilee, who rebelled about the time of the taxing, and excited the people to resist the payment of any tribute to the Romans. They were nearly akin to the Pharisees, being principally distinguished by their holding the maxim of uncontrollable liberty. They acknowledged no superior but God; and rather than call any man master, were ready to submit to the most excrutiating death.

Such was the religious state of the Jews under the government of Pilate. In our Life of Christ, we continued his history till the crucifixion and resurrection of the Son of God. An opinion prevailed among the ancient Christians, that, as Pilate consented unwillingly upon that occasion, so he transmitted to the emperor Tiberius a very favorable account of our Saviour's character.

To leave, however, this matter undetermined, we proceed to observe, that the conduct of Pilate still continued to be the most atrocious and bloody imaginable. An event soon after happened, which brought his tyranny to a conclusion. An impostor appeared in Samaria in the year A. D. 35, a little after the death of Stephen, who gave out to the multitude, that if they would meet him at Mount Gerizim, he would show them the sacred vessels which they believed Moses had concealed in that place. Vast numbers of ignorant people immediately assembled in arms, and laid siege to Tirathaba, a village in that vicinity, waiting

for others to join them there, who would, they expected, enable them to form a sufficient body to go up and take possession of the pretended holy treasure. Pilate, who had received timely information, collected a large body of cavalry and infantry, and took possession of the mountain, whence he attacked the Samaritans, routed them with great slaughter, and brought off a considerable number of prisoners, the most distinguished of whom he ordered to be beheaded. Chagrined by this defeat and its bloody consequences, the chief persons among the Samaritans made application to Vitellius, Governor of Syria, insisting that Pilate had been guilty of murder, in putting to death men that had not armed to oppose the Roman authority, but only to resist his outrageous oppression. On receiving this complaint, Vitellius despatched his friend Marcellus to take upon him the government of Judea, and commanded Pilate to repair immediately to Rome, to answer for his conduct at the tribunal of Cæsar. Josephus has informed us nothing further concerning Pilate, than that Tiberius died while he was performing his voyage, and that the loss of his government was only the forerunner of greater evils. There is, however, an ancient tradition that he was banished to Vienne, in Gaul; and Eusebius asserts, from the authority of some Greek annalists, that he became his own executioner.

In a former chapter of this work, we mentioned that a war was carried on between Herod Antipas and Aretas, in consequence of Herod's divorcing the daughter of Aretas, that he might gratify his passion for Herodias. The army of Herod being defeated by the Arabian prince, Vitellius was commanded to assist the former, and accordingly marched towards Petra with two legions of Roman auxiliaries. When he had got as far as Ptolemais, and was on the point of crossing Judea, he was met by the principal people of the country, who most earnestly solicited him that he would take a different route; for that the Jewish law was insulted, and their religion profaned, by the images that the Romans usually carry in their colors. This reason had its proper weight with the general, who directed that his army should march about by the way of a large plain; and, in the mean time, he took with him Herod, the Tetrach, and several other friends, who went up to Jerusalem to worship on occasion of a solemn festival which was then approaching. He made three days' stay in this city; during which time he was treated with all possible marks of honor and respect; and while he remained there, he deprived Jonathan of the office of high-priest, and conferred it on his brother Theophilus; and, on the fourth day, he received letters which announced the death of Tiberius; whereupon he caused the people to swear allegiance to his successor, Caius Caligula; and this being done, he gave orders for the recall of his

troops, and directed that they should go into winter quarters, the change in the government having determined him to put a period to the war; and after this he returned to Antioch.

The accession of Caligula was an event of the greatest importance to another branch of the Herodian family—Agrippa, the son of Aristobulus, one of the two unfortunate princes, the sons of Herod the Great by Mariamne, the Asmonean. The early life of Agrippa had been a strange course of adventure and vicissitude. On his father's execution, he was sent to Rome, where he enjoyed the favor of Antonia, the widow of the elder Drusus, the brother of Tiberius. Antonia entertained a sincere friendship for Bernice, the mother of Agrippa, and under her protection the young Idumean prince attached himself to the person of Drusus, the son of Tiberius. Agrippa inherited the profusion, but not the wealth of the Herodian race. On his mother's death, he speedily dissipated his whole property, and found himself overwhelmed with debts. His associate, Drusus, died; and Tiberius issued orders that none of the youth's intimate companions should be admitted into his presence, lest they should awaken the melancholy recollection of his beloved son. Agrippa, in the utmost distress, retreated to his native land, and took up his residence at Malatha, an insignificant village in Idumea. He subsequently passed through many changes of fortune, related with much interest by Josephus, in which he suffered successively by jealousy, indigence and arrest. But his mother's friend Antonia, still protected him. She lent him a sum sufficient to discharge his debt to the imperial treasury, and Agrippa was reinstated in the favor of Tiberius. The emperor recommended him to attach himself to the person of his grandson, the younger Tiberius; but the Jewish prince, with better fortune or judgment, preferred that of Caius Caligula. In this state of advancement, he borrowed a million drachms of Thallus, a Samaritan freedman of Cæsar, and repaid his debt to Antonia. Unfortunately, one day when he was riding with Caligula in a chariot, he expressed aloud his earnest petition to Providence, that Tiberius might speedily be removed, in order to make room for a more worthy successor. The speech was overheard by Eutychus, a freedman, the driver of the chariot. Tiberius was already offended at the court paid by Agrippa to the young Caius; and suddenly, in the public circus, commanded Macron, the captain of his guard, "to put that man in chains." Macron, surprised at the sudden change, delayed the execution of the command; till Tiberius returning to the same spot, he demanded against whom the order was directed. The emperor sternly pointed to Agrippa, and, notwithstanding his humble supplications, the heir of the Asmonean princes, clad as he was in the royal purple, was put in fetters, like a common malefactor.

Even in this fallen condition, Antonia did not desert the son of her friend Bernice, she obtained for him some mitigation of the discomforts and privations of his prison. At length his release arrived. Immediately on the death of Tiberius, Marsyas, his faithful freed-slave, hastened to his master's dungeon, and communicated the joyful intelligence, saying in the Hebrew language, "The lion is dead." With the morning the news was confirmed, and shortly after, Caligula entered Rome in imperial state. On the very day of his entry, but for the prudence of Antonia, he would have commanded the release of his friend. A short time after, he sent the order for his liberation, received him at his court, and conferred on him the vacant Tetrarchate of Philip, with the title of king. He presented him likewise with a chain of gold, of the same weight with that of iron, with which he had been fettered.

Agrippa remained that year in Rome; during the next, the second of Caligula's reign, he arrived in Palestine with royal pomp, to take possession of his dignity.

Up to the reign of Caligula the Jews had enjoyed without any serious interrruption, the universal toleration, which Roman policy permitted to the religion of the subject states.

The character of Caius Caligula is well known to all who are in the slightest degree acquainted with Roman history. It was he who wished that the whole Roman people had but one neck, that he might break it at once. It is scarcely too much to affirm, that he had all the follies which could degrade, and all the vices which could contaminate human nature. Yet his vanity was so great, that he was disposed to account himself a god, and lay claim to the honors which the heathens were accustomed to render to their deities of the first order, such as Mercury, Apollo, and Mars. The Jews, therefore, were the only people who, by their tenacious opposition to the emperor's absurd requests, were likely to draw down upon their heads the tempest of his indignation. He accordingly made no secret of his enmity against them, and the animosity which he entertained soon diffused its influence through the different provinces of the empire.

The inhabitants of Alexandria no sooner gained intelligence of the emperor's disposition, than they began a most violent persecution, in consequence of which, the Jews of Alexandria determined to send an embassy to Rome, to deprecate the wrath of Caligula. Caius was, however, so effectually wrought upon by Egyptian flatterers, who composed a part of his household, that he not only treated the ambassadors with the most mortifying contempt, but sent orders to Petronius, the Governor of Syria, to erect his statue in the sanctuary at Jerusalem.

Petronius appears to have been a prudent and humane man. This last action having alarmed the nation, he was obliged to

tell them the orders that he had received from Caligula; upon which he was addressed by all the heads of the Jews, who assured him, in the humblest manner, that they would sooner hazard the loss of all that was dear to them, even their lives, than suffer their temple to be thus profaned.

About this time, however, king Agrippa happening at Rome, gave a sumptuous feast to the emperor; and while his guest was warm with wine, embraced an opportunity to interpose a petition in favor of the Jews. This petition, which showed not only the greatest disinterestedness, but also the most unfeigned love for his country and religion, even at the hazard of his life, had such an effect on that emperor, that he wrote immediately to his governor, that if his statue was not already set up, he should forbear doing it—adding, that he had altered his design out of friendship to Agrippa. However, the lightness of his temper soon made him repent of his complaisance to him, so that he designed to make a second attempt unknown to him. At the same time, his resentment against Petronius being kindled afresh, he sent him an order to despatch himself; but Caius Caligula was assassinated time enough to prevent either mischief taking effect.

Agrippa, who still remained at Rome, was very serviceable to Claudius in promoting his accession to the empire; in consideration of which, the emperor confirmed to him all the grants of Caligula.

Returning to Judea, he determined to practise every thing which could render him acceptable to the Jews. Still further to gratify the Jews, we have already seen, in another part of this work, he commenced a bloody persecution amongst the Christians, but was cut off by Providence in the midst of his pride, an awful monument of the divine displeasure. His reign afforded a short gleam of sunshine to the Jews, whose dark night of calamity was now rapidly approaching.

Agrippa's surviving family consisted of a son of his own name, aged seventeen years; and three daughters, Bernice, Mariamne, and Drusilla.

The death of king Agrippa was no sooner made known to the public, than the inhabitants of Cæsarea and Sebaste, loaded his memory with the most scandalous and opprobrious epithets that their imaginations could possibly invent. Soldiers at those places, in aid of the calumny, took the statues of Agrippa's three daughters from the palace, and conveyed them in triumph to public brothels, with brutish terms of reproach that are too infamous for repetition.

Plaudius, who at first had determined to put the young Agrippa in possession of his father's kingdom, was induced to change his mind, and thereon deputed Cuspus Fadus to the command; but paid so great a respect to the memory of the deceased, that

he strictly charged him to punish severely the inhabitants of Cæsarea and Sebaste, on account of the indignities they had offered to Agrippa and his daughters.

During Fadus' government, there arose a notable impostor named Theudas, who drew great numbers of the deluded Jews after him, bidding them follow him beyond Jordan, and promising them that he would divide the waters of that river, as Joshua had done, by his single word. Cuspius sent some troops of horse and foot against him and his followers, killed some of them, took others prisoners, and amongst them Theudas himself, whom he caused to be beheaded, and his head to be brought to Jerusalem. This, according to Josephus, is the most remarkable thing that happened during Fadus' government.

He was soon after succeeded by Tiberius Alexander, an apostate Jew, of the sacerdotal race, and nephew to the famous Philo. One of his first exploits was the crucifying of James and Simon, the sons of Judas, surnamed Galileus, head of the Gaulonitish sect.

Herod of Chalcis being dead, Agrippa, the son of Agrippa, was advanced by the emperor to the kingdom of his uncle; and that of Judea was governed by Cumanus, who succeeded Tiberius Alexander. During the administration of the latter, many fresh misfortunes overtook the Jews. While the people were assembled in prodigious numbers at the festival of unleavened bread, one of the soldiers stationed at the gate of the temple to prevent disorders, insultingly exposed his nakedness to the assembly. This inflamed the multitude; they demanded justice on the soldier for the insult; and, amongst the rest, some violent young men proceeded to high words and quarrelling. Cumanus, fearing an insurrection, sent other soldiers to support the former, which occasioned such a terror to the Jews, that they endeavored all in their power to get out of the temple; but the throng was so great in the passages, that near ten thousand were pressed or trod to death. This circumstance turned the Jewish festival into mourning; there were tears and lamentations in every house; for the calamity was so general, that almost every family shared in it.

No sooner was this misfortune ended, than it was succeeded by another. A soldier happening to meet with the books of Moses, tore and threw them in the fire. Affronted by this insult, the Jews repaired to Cumanus in Cæsarea, and urged him, in the most violent manner, to punish the author of so daring an outrage on the law of God. Cumanus, finding that the people would not be appeased, ordered the soldier to be put to death in their presence; and thus the tumult subsided.

Claudius, in the twelfth year of his reign, constituted Felix, brother of Pallax, governor of Judea, Samaria, Galilee, and Perea, in the place of Cumanus. He advanced Agrippa from the kingdom of Chalcis to a better government, giving him likewise Tra-

chonitis, Batanea, with the tetrarchy that Varus had held, and the kingdom of Lysanias.

This happened in the year fifty-four, soon after which the emperor Claudius died, and was succeeded by Nero.

Agrippa, after his last mentioned promotion, gave his sister Drusilla, who is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, to Azizus, king of the Emesenes. Soon after their union, a separation took place between Drusilla and Azizus. She was admired as the most beautiful woman of her time, and Felix, the governor of Judea, became violently enamored of her; prevailed upon her to renounce her religion, abandon her husband and marry him. By Felix, Drusilla had a son, named Agrippa, who, in the time of Titus Cæsar, together with his wife, fell a sacrifice to a violent eruption of Mount Vesuvius.

Felix was no sooner vested with his authority, than he made war on the robbers who had now infested the country for twenty years. The number of thieves killed, taken prisoners, and executed, including the country people who joined them, was incredibly great.

These miscreants being routed, another set of villains appeared, who were called Sicarii, from Sica, the poignard used by them. These used to commit murders in the open streets of Jerusalem, particularly when the city was crowded on public days. They carried short daggers under their clothes, and privately stabbed those against whom they had an enmity. This practice was continued for some time before the authors of it were suspected. The citizens were so alarmed, that their apprehensions aggravated the reality; every man at a distance was suspected for an enemy, and the people were afraid of their approaching friends.

Another set now arose, false prophets and Messiahs, jugglers and impostors, whose tongues were as mischievous as the weapons of the former, contaminating the minds of the people. Felix, foreseeing that this plan tended to foment a rebellion, great numbers of the enthusiasts were destroyed.

It was at this time that that Egyptian rebelled who is referred to in the Acts, and whose history is recorded in a former chapter.

The robbers and magicians now concerted too with each other how they should engage the people to shake off the Roman yoke, and assert an absolute liberty, so that Judea was reduced to the utmost degree of confusion and despair.

The city of Cæsarea, about this time began to be the scene of transactions which not a little accelerated the destruction of the Jewish state.

A contention arose between the Cæsarean Jews and the Syrians on the extent of certain privileges of citizenship; the Jews of Cæsarea asserting their preference in the right of Herod their king, as the original founder of the city. The Syrians insisted

that, previous to the establishment of the city of Herod, and of its being inhabited by Jews, the place had existed under the denomination of the tower of Straton.

The faction grew at length to violence. It was quelled by the punishment of offenders; was revived again, and again repulsed with the loss, as usual, of many of the Jews. Felix, finally, in order more completely to terminate this sedition, desired the leading men of both parties to visit Nero in the capacity of commissioners, and plead the cause of their friends. Soon after this, the emperor transferred the government to Portius Festus.

At this time two distinguished Syrians of Cæsarea, by the aid of Beryllus, Greek secretary to Nero, procured the emperor's mandate for depriving the Jews of the privileges and immunities of the city of Cæsarea, which they claimed in common with the Syrians. This mandate is to be considered as the cause of all the miseries which the Jews afterwards experienced; for the Cæsarean Jews were thereby inflamed to greater violence, nor did their restless dispositions subside till they were involved in all the calamities of an open war.

Upon the arrival of Festus in Judea, he found the country ravaged and laid waste, the people compelled to desert their habitations, the land overrun by great numbers of robbers, who set fire to and plundered houses, and committed every other kind of enormity without control.

An event occurred about this time, which is characteristic of the spirit which then actuated the Jewish nation. Near the porch of the royal palace at Jerusalem, king Agrippa erected a high apartment which commanded a view of the city; and from which might be perceived all that passed in the temple. This circumstance highly offended the Jews, who therefore erected a wall intercepting the view. Agrippa and Festus in vain gave orders for the demolition of the wall; they replied, that they would sooner relinquish their lives than commit any violence against their temple. The affair was not settled short of an appeal to Nero, who was induced to authorize its continuance.

Upon the death of Festus, Nero conferred the government upon Albinus.

Albinus is described by Josephus as a man abandoned to every vice. Avarice, corruption, extortion, oppression, public and private were equally familiar to him. He accepted bribes in civil and personal causes, and oppressed the nation by the weight of arbitrary taxes. If any offender, however atrocious, was under sentence of the law, a friend and a bribe would ensure his liberty. The injured dare not complain: those who were in any danger of losing their property, were glad to compound to save the rest, and the receivers proved the worst of thieves.

At this period of misrule, the singing men of the tribe of Levi petitioned Agrippa for permission to use the linen stole, which only the priests had then a right to wear. The king granted their petition with the usual formalities; and the other Levites, who served in the temple, he permitted to officiate as singers. The grant of these privileges was contrary to the laws and customs of the Jewish nation, which, Josephus observes, have never been violated with impunity.

About this time, that is, A. D. 63, the work of the temple was completed, which had been carried on ever since the time of Herod. Eighteen thousand workmen had been engaged in the execution of this labor; these men becoming destitute of employment, they were employed by Agrippa in paving the streets of Jerusalem with white stones.

The temple of Jerusalem, begun in the eighteenth year of Herod's reign and now finished, had been to the Jews rather the object of their hopes than of their expectations; for they thought it almost impossible that such a work should be completed.

There were engaged in this work, a hundred carriages to remove stones and other materials; of handcraftsmen of all sorts there were ten thousand artists, and these the best that could be procured; and, for the superintendence of them, a thousand priests that understood the business of masonry and carpentry; supplied with robes and vestments at the king's expense. Of the superstructure of the temple, the length was a hundred cubits, and the height one hundred and twenty. The whole building was a composition of durable white stone, each stone being eight cubits high, twelve broad, and twenty-five in length.

The principal front of this extraordinary building had very much the appearance of a palace, the centre part of which was much higher than the sides. The prospect it afforded towards the fields was extremely agreeable, and this prospect extended into the country several furlongs; nor was the view of the building itself less pleasing. The porch of the temple was a curiosity no less singular than the rest of the building, the upper part of it being adorned with an abundance of the richest tapestry hanging, a variety of beautiful purple flowers and pillars appearing to be interwoven; round the pillars a golden vine crept and entwined itself, on the branches of which were suspended clusters of grapes that descended in elegant negligence from the cornices of the room; the whole exhibited a piece of workmanship no less valuable for the materials with which it was formed, than for the admirable skill with which it was executed.

Near this city nature had placed a steep rocky hill, but on the eastward side of it the descent was greatly sloping. Now Solomon, in former ages. had, by the particular command of God, surrounded this hillock with a wall, and the lower extremity of

it was encompassed by another wall, under which, towards the south, was a deep valley. This was composed of stones of immense size, cramped together with iron round the whole work, and extending down to the bottom of the hill. This work was built in a square form, and was deemed a most extraordinary piece of architecture, allowance being made for its depth and magnitude.

When this wall was built up to its proper height, the space between that and the hill was filled up with earth, so as to bring the ground upon a level with the wall; and then were erected four galleries, each gallery being deemed a furlong in extent. Within the square, likewise, there was another stone wall, which extended round the top of the hill, and was ornamented with a double porch on the east side, which was opposite to the portal of the temple which stood in the middle. Several princes contributed to adorn this portal by many tokens of their royal bounty; and round about various parts of the temple were hung the spoils and trophies which had been acquired in battles with the barbarians.

A strong and well fortified building stood on one of the angles of the north side, to which was given the name of Baris, or the Tower; and herein were deposited the pontificial habits, which, agreeably to ancient custom, were never to be brought forth but when the high-priest wanted them for his immediate use in the exercise of his office.

Before the middle inclosure was placed the altar where the priests offered up their sacrifices. This place was so sacred, that even Herod himself durst not enter into it, since the law prohibited him from so doing, as he was not a priest. For this reason, Herod committed the care of this part of the sacred work to the priests; and they completed it in the space of eighteen months; whereas, Herod himself, in superintending the completion of the rest, employed no less time than eight years.

The temple being thus restored, the circumstance was celebrated by every demonstration of the sincerest joy.

The character of Florus, who succeeded Albinus in the year sixty-four, was so much more abandoned than that of his predecessor, that Albinus seemed innocent on the comparison. His conduct in his province was more like that of an executioner than a governor; for he treated all the people like criminals, and extended his rapine and tyranny beyond all bounds. His avarice was carried to so extravagant a pitch, that the inhabitants of the province were reduced to a degree of poverty little short of starving, and many of them left the country in absolute want of the necessaries of life.

Cestius Gallus, who had at this time command in Syria, happening in Jerusalem, at the feast of unleavened bread, a number

of Jews, not less than three hundred thousand, applied to him to have compassion on a wretched people, and relieve the province from the infamous government of Florus. This proceeding was immediately made known to Florus, who was so far from being concerned at it, that he made a perfect jest of the affair. Fearing, however, that the cause would be brought before Cæsar, he set about how he could incite them to a revolt, and cover his own crimes by gradually forcing them into a rebellion.

At this time, the Greeks of Cæsarea had carried their cause against the Jews before Cæsar, who had pronounced sentence in their behalf; a circumstance that was the origin of the Jewish war. This sentence is dated in the month Artemisias, in the seventeenth of the reign of Agrippa, and twelfth of Nero.

A certain Greek in that city, in mere malice, crowded a number of small shops into a passage, which almost blocked up the way to the synagogue, leaving barely sufficient room for a single person to pass. Affronted by this insult some Jewish young men, in the heat of passion, went to the workmen and warned them to proceed at their peril. This order of theirs was countermanded by Florus, whom the Jews now therefore thought it necessary to soften by means of a bribe. They contracted with Florus to forbid the building on the receipt of eight talents. The governor took the money, and promised to give the necessary directions; but he had no sooner received it, than he went from Cæsarea to Sebaste, as if on purpose to increase the dispute, and as if he triumphed in the opportunity he gave them of murdering each other.

The Jewish sabbath falling on the following day, a malicious Cæsarean placed an earthen vessel with a sacrifice of birds upon it before the door of the synagogue, while the people were assembled within at their devotions. The Jews lost all patience at the profane derision; nor were the Cæsareans less forward to come to an encounter.

Jucundus, a captain of horse, arrived at this critical juncture; he did all in his power to quell the disturbance. The Jews finding that the Cæsareans were too powerful for Jucundus, took the books of their law, and conveyed them to the province of Narbata, at the distance of about sixty furlongs from Cæsarea, while ten of their principal people were sent to Florus, petitioning for redress. He instantly ordered them into custody.

In the mean time, Florus continued to foment the sedition: and, that he might do it the more effectually, he sent and demanded seventeen talents out of the treasury, for the service of the emperor. This circumstance as was expected, caused the Jews to pursue the name of Florus with curses, clamor, and every kind of insult. Florus thereupon marched with a body of horse and foot to Jerusalem, where he made the power of Rome subservient

to his revenge and avarice; and filled the minds of the people wherever he went with terror and apprehension.

At this time Florus resided in the palace; and, on the following day he ascended the tribunal, and positively demanded that the authors of the insulting speeches made in his name, should be delivered up; threatening, at the same time, that he would be revenged on those in the place, if the guilty were not surrendered. To this the Jews replied, that the majority of their people were peaceable; and with regard to those who had spoken freely, they intreated pardon for them, rather than that the unoffending should be destroyed in revenge of the insult of the guilty few.

All the effect this reasoning had on Florus, was to increase his rage, and he ordered the soldiers to the great market to pillage the place, and kill all they should encounter. The soldiers not only executed their orders, but made equally free with every house, and destroyed the inhabitants without distinction. It is estimated that six hundred and thirty persons were sacrificed on that day, including men, women and children; for even infants at their mothers' breasts were not spared.

On the following day, the people assembled for revenge. But the high-priests and men of eminence rent their garments, and going among the people entreated them to desist. The passions of the people now began to subside, partly through respect to the mediators, and partly in the hope that the malice of the governor was at an end.

This return of peace, however, was painful to Florus, who began to consider how he might foment a new disturbance. With this view, he sent for the high-priests and principal men: informed them that two companies were coming from Cæsarea, and demanded that the people should go out and meet them on the way.

The priests and Levites could scarcely persuade the Jews to this step, and not at all until they had held up to view the holy vessels, and other precious ornaments of the temple, which would probably be rifled by the Romans if they should be irritated. And when they at last consented, their salutation was received with silent contempt. The more violent, as was expected, began immediately to revile Florus. The soldiers as they had been ordered, then instantly attacked the Jews with clubs and cudgels, totally routed them, and trampled numbers of them under the feet of their horses. Others were crushed to death in the crowd, or smothered at the gate; so that, on the whole, the spectacle was a dreadful one. The next day Florus made an attempt with his soldiers to force into the temple, but the Jews fought so bravely that he was compelled to retreat to the palace with the remainder of his troops. Apprehending that Florus would return to the attack, and make an attempt on the temple by the way of fort Antonia, they immediately cut down a gallery which

communicated between that fort and the temple. Florus was mortified and his avarice disappointed; for his principal view was to seize the holy treasure. Leaving therefore a company behind him, he returned to Cæsarea with the remainder of his army.

Cestius Gallus, governor of Syria, having obtained information of the mode in which Florus had governed, thought it prudent previously to send a man of credit and address to inquire into facts, and give him a faithful account of the success of his inquiries. The person fixed on was a tribune, named Politanus.

Politanus having taken a view of the city, and indisputably convinced himself of the loyal disposition of the Jews, he assembled the people, commended their known fidelity to the Romans; and gave them a variety of good counsel and advice respecting the preservation of public peace.

This treatment, in conjunction with a speech made to them in the gymnasium by Agrippa, succeeded in pacifying the Jews, and dissuading them from violent and seditious practices.

The insurrection having now in a great degree subsided, Agrippa advised the people to a patient submission to Florus, till another governor should be appointed by Cæsar. This again inflamed the passions of the people, who treated him with the most opprobrious language, and pelted him with stones till he was compelled to abandon the city.

Many of the factious Jews about this time privately entered a Roman fortress called Massada, put the garrison to death, and introduced in the place of it one of their own. This may be considered as the first important warlike transaction in the rebellion of the Jews, and was regarded by the insurgents as a great accession to their strength, since Massada was remarkably strong both by nature and art.

General Revolt of the Jews.

The rebels were already in possession of the lower town and the temple, when Agrippa, anxious for the public welfare, despatched to Jerusalem two thousand horse, to quell the rebellion. Frequent skirmishes now ensued. The insurgents made attacks in the most desperate manner; but the royal forces appeared to have a superior knowledge of the military art. Though there was a great slaughter on both sides, not even the least shadow of advantage was obtained by either.

Seven days afterwards, however, at the feast of Xylophoria the insurgents broke into the upper city; supported by the Sicarii, and burnt the palaces of Agrippa, and Bernice, together with the public records. The castle of Antonia was next carried after a siege of two days, the Roman garrison put to the sword, and the castle burnt.

The rebels gathering strength now proceeded against the royal palace of Herod, in which the troops of Agrippa had taken sanctuary. Metilius the Roman general, with his soldiers, was compelled after a brave defence to capitulate on condition of their lives. But they had no sooner given up their arms, than they were treacherously massacred to a man.

This assassination of the Romans took place on the sabbath-day, which was deemed a great aggravation of the crime, since on that day all labor whatsoever, even the most sacred, is totally forbidden to the Jews by their law.

The Roman power, however, was very little injured by this atrocious outrage, since the loss of the troops that were thus destroyed was inconsiderable, proportioned to the vast armies of which they were possessed; but this circumstance was an evident prelude to the destruction of the Jews; for an inevitable war was actually in view, and that founded on a good cause: the city, which had taken the principal share in the dispute, was so corrupted by perfidy and rebellion, that, admitting it might escape the vengeance of the Romans, it was not reasonable to suppose but that it must fall a sacrifice to divine justice. The face of affairs was now more mournful, melancholy, and desponding, than it had been at any former period: they who were innocent dreaded to share the fate of the guilty, and feared that they should be made answerable for the crimes they had not committed.

Divine providence so directed affairs, that on the very day, and at the same hour of the above-recited massacre, there was a slaughter of the Jews at Cæsarea, in which above twenty thousand persons fell a sacrifice, not a single Jew in the town being left alive. The whole nation of the Jews became outrageous on occasion of this horrid slaughter; and, dividing themselves into distinct bodies, dispersed into different quarters, laying waste the villages of Syria, and adjacent cities, among which were Philadelphia, Gibonitis, Gerassa, Pella, and Scythopolis. This being done, they made their attacks on Gadara, Hippon, and Gaulanitis, Ptolemais, Gaba, Cæsarea, Sebaste, Askelon, Anthedon, Gara, and the Tyrian Cedasa, some of which places they burnt, and levelled others with the ground.

On the other hand, the Syrians wreaked their vengeance on all the Jews they could find in country places, whom they put to the sword, and extended the persecution against the inhabitants of the several cities. At this time, the condition of Syria was far more deplorable than language can describe, since, in fact, there were in every city two armies; nor was any safety to be expected for the one but in the destruction of the other.

It was a dreadful spectacle to behold the streets filled with the bodies of men, women, and children, who had been murdered, stripped, and left, not only unburied, but uncovered.

At Scythopolis the massacre amounted to thirteen thousand. In Askelon two thousand five hundred fell a sacrifice; in Ptolemais two thousand; and many at Tyre, Hippon, and Gadara.

Cestius remarking the antipathy in which the Jews were every where held, took advantage of this circumstance to prosecute the war with vigor; burning villages, and laying waste the adjacent country wherever he came.

He proceeded from Ptolemais to Cæsarea, whence he despatched a division of his army to Joppa, with directions, that if they could get an easy possession of the place, they should preserve it; but if they found that the inhabitants made preparation to defend it, in that case they should wait for the arrival of the rest of the army. However, the Romans attacked the place both by land and sea, and became masters of it with very little difficulty; for the inhabitants were so far from being able to resist the attack, that they had not even an opportunity of making their escape; but all of them, men, women, and children, masters and servants, were indiscriminately put to the sword; the number of persons slain being reckoned at eight thousand four hundred, and the city was plundered and reduced to ashes. The cities of Zebulon, Sephoris, Antipatris, and Lydia with their inhabitants, shared a similar fate.

Convinced of the excessive dangers of the war, the Jews abandoned their former scruples with regard to their sacred days, and applied themselves strictly to their arms. Imagining that their force was now sufficient to cope with the Romans, they made a desperate sally on the sabbath-day, and with a furious uproar attacked their enemies. The rage which, on this occasion, inflamed them, so as to induce them to forget their duty, was advantageous to them in the execution of the projected enterprise; for, on the first charge, they put the front of the Romans into great disorder, and penetrated so far into the main body of the army, that if a body of foot had not yet remained entirely unbroken, and a party of horse arrived to their relief in this critical juncture, it is probable that Cestius and all must have been cut to pieces. On this occasion, four hundred of the Roman cavalry were slain, and a hundred and fifteen of the infantry, while of the Jews there fell no more on the spot than twenty-two men.

The main body of the Jews now retreating in good order, went back into the city. Cestius remained in the field three days after this action, during all which time a party of the Jews was stationed on the adjacent hills to watch his movements; and, it is probable, that the Jews would have attacked the Romans, if they had offered to depart during that period.

On the thirtieth of the month Hyperberetæus, Cestius advanced with his whole army in a regular manner, to the borders of

the city, where the people in general were so terrified by the faction, that they were afraid to take any step of consequence; while the principal promoters of the sedition were so alarmed by the conduct and discipline of the Romans on their march, that they retired from the extremities of the city, and took refuge in the temple. Cestius proceeded by the way of Bezetha; and, as he passed forwards, burnt Cœnopolis, and a place which was denominated the wood-market. Hence he advanced to the upper town, and pitched his camp at a small distance from the palace. If at this critical juncture he had made a vigorous attack, he might have made himself master of the place, and put a period to the war; but he was diverted from this purpose by the mediation of two generals, named Tyrannus and Priscus, and several other officers, with the prevailing argument of some of Florus' money: and this unhappy proceeding was the occasion of the present misfortune of the Jews, and the source of many of their future calamities.

Cestius, on the sixth day, made an assault on the north side of the temple, with a select force chosen from his troops and bowmen; but he was received with such a violent shower of shot and stones from the porch and galleries, that the Romans were not only repeatedly compelled to retire from the severity of the charge, but finally obliged to abandon the enterprize. But the providence of God would not permit a war which had been undertaken with so little provocation to end in such a manner. The revolters were so much encouraged by this unexpected departure of Cestius, that they attacked him in the rear, annoyed him exceedingly in his retreat, and destroyed a number both of his cavalry and infantry, compelling him at last to escape by night, and not without the loss of four hundred of his choice troops, whom he had left to keep up the appearance of an encampment.

When the news of the defeat of Cestius had reached Damascus, the Syrians determined to provide for their safety by the massacre of their Jewish neighbors, whom they cut in pieces to the amount of ten thousand, almost without opposition.

The more moderate Jews abandoned Jerusalem, and the Christians in a body are said to have retreated to Pella. This is the time referred to in Matt. xxiv. 15, 20. Such of their countrymen as were determined upon resistance, held a meeting in the temple, in which they appointed the officers for carrying on the war. Joseph, the son of Gorion, and Ananias, the high-priest, were constituted governors in civil affairs, having a charge to superintend the city, and especially take care of the fortifications. Jesus, the son of Sapphas, and Eleazar, were sent into Idumea; Joseph to Jericho; Manasses beyond Jordan; and John the Essene to Thamna. Gophnitis and Acrabatene were given to John, the son of Ananias; and the two Galilees to Josephus, the son of

Matthias, to whom likewise submitted the government of Gamala, the strongest place in the country.

The emperor, on receiving intelligence of the defeat of Cestius in Judea, was thrown into the most terrible consternation; but he dissembled his alarm, ostentatiously asserting that it was to the misconduct of his general, and not to their own valor, that the Jews were indebted for victory. He industriously sought for a man qualified to assume the important task of chastising the revolted Jews. Upon mature deliberation, Nero at length selected Vespasian, a man of great abilities, who had been from his early youth engaged in a continued succession of military exploits, and had just returned from a conquest of the Germans and Britains in the west. Immediately upon receiving the commission from Nero, who accompanied it with the strongest professions of friendship, he commanded his son Titus to lead the fifth and tenth legions into Alexandria—he himself crossing the Hellespont, proceeded by land into Syria.

Vespasian being joined by the auxiliaries of Agrippa and the legions of his son Titus, in all amounting to sixty thousand effective men, marched to the frontiers of Galilee. He here determined on an expedition against Jotapata, the strongest city in Galilee, and the place to which the Jews had fled in vast numbers for refuge. Josephus had previously thrown himself with his troops into this place, a circumstance which much encouraged the garrison, while it stimulated the Romans to make the more vigorous attack, as they hoped, by taking the general, to reduce to submission all the Galilean revolters.

He established his camp on a hill about seven furlongs to the north of the city, and began to assault the city, which was defended with great bravery. Josephus, at the head of the Jews, exhibited acts of the most desperate valor, while the resentment of the Romans was roused by the obstinate resistance which they experienced.

The city of Jotapata is built on a rock, and on three sides are vallies of such surprising depth, that a man cannot look down from the precipices without being seized with giddiness. It is absolutely inaccessible, but upon the north, where a part of the city stands, upon the brow of the mountain; but this quarter Josephus caused to be strongly fortified and taken into the city.

Finding the place so admirably situated for defence, and that he had to contend with an intrepid enemy, Vespasian assembled a council of his principal officers, to debate on the means of obtaining victory. The issue of the deliberations was, that a large terrace should be raised on that side of the city which appeared to be the least capable of resistance. Immediately upon this resolution being taken, Vespasian ordered his whole army to

employ themselves in procuring materials for the intended work. Immense quantities of timber and stone were conveyed from the adjacent mountains, and hurdles were formed to protect the Romans from the darts and other weapons that were thrown from the city.

The terrace being now raised nearly to a level with the city wall, Josephus considered that it would reflect dishonor upon him if he should omit to engage in as arduous a task for the defence of the place as the enemy had undertaken for its destruction: and therefore ordered the wall to be raised in proportion to the advancement of the enemy's work, and to be kept at a sufficient height above the summit of the mount.

The workmen being secured through the contrivance of Josephus, from the missiles of the enemy, by means of raw hides stretched upon stakes, continued indefatigably industrious both by day and night; and they soon erected a wall twenty cubits high, on which were formed towers and strong embattlements. The Romans who had entertained the utmost confidence of subduing the city, were equally astonished and confounded by the depth of policy and invincible resolution of their adversaries.

Vespasian now determined to turn the siege into a blockade, not doubting that this, though it might be a slow way of subduing the enemy, would prove a very effectual one. They had an abundance of corn and all other necessaries in the town, excepting only water and salt, there being neither spring nor fountain, in the city. For the supply of water, Josephus at length had recourse to the following stratagem. Recollecting that there was on the west side of the city a hollow or gutter in a place so little frequented that it was not likely to have been observed by the enemy, he wrote to the Jews without the city to cause water and other necessaries to be conveyed to him through this passage, enjoining them to be careful that the messengers should be covered with the hides of beasts, and instructed to walk upon their hands and feet; that in case of being observed by the watch, they might be mistaken for dogs or other animals. An intercourse was thus maintained, till the Romans at length discovered and blocked up the avenue.

At length Vespasian, having observed that the terrace which he had been raising had almost arrived at the height of the wall, determined to make use of the battering ram, to demolish it.

Slingers, archers, &c. were ordered to advance with their several machines nearer to the town, in order to beat off the Jews who defended the walls while the ram was brought forward, covered with hurdles and hides for the protection of the assailants. The first stroke of the engine threw the Jews into a most terrible consternation; and Josephus knowing that the wall could not possibly long withstand repeated batterings in the same place,

ordered a number of sacks filled with chaff to be lowered by means of ropes, to intercept the blows of the ram. The Jews who had by this time a most alarming prospect of speedy destruction, redoubled their efforts, and prompted to various expenditures of defence by the ingenuity of Josephus, assailed the Romans successively with fire, pitch, sulphur, boiling oil, together with the common missiles of war. Thus Josephus and his garrison bravely defended the city during a siege of forty-seven days.

At day-break of the forty-seventh day, while the vigilance of the guard was abated by fatigue and rest, the city was betrayed by a deserter into the hands of the Romans. They put the centinels to death, cut the throats of the guards, and entered the city. The recollection of their sufferings in the siege suppressed every sentiment of humanity and compassion in the breasts of the conquerors.

Every Jew who was met by the Romans on that day was put to instant death; and during some following days, they carefully searched the subterraneous and other secret places for the survivors, all of whom, excepting women and children, they destroyed. The whole number of Jews slain amounted to forty thousand, and the prisoners were twelve hundred. In obedience to the orders of Vespasian, the castles were burnt, and the city was entirely laid in ruin. The Romans became masters of Jotapata on the first day of the month Panemus, in the thirteenth year of the reign of Nero.

Josephus, who had concealed himself in a large cave along with forty other distinguished Jews, was at length prevailed upon to surrender himself to Vespasian, whose accession to the empire he pretends to have predicted, and by whom he appears to have been treated with the greatest respect.

While the main army was occupied in the siege of Jotapata, Trajan took Japtha, a town in its neighborhood, putting to death the inhabitants, to the number of fifteen thousand; and Titus followed up the butchery with twelve thousand more, selling the women and children into slavery.

The march of Vespasian was marked every where with the like desolation and slaughter. Joppa, on the sea-coast, Tiberias, Taricheæ, Gamala and Gischala, shared a similar fate with Jotapata and Japtha. The destruction of these Jewish cities, with a waste of lives and a degree of suffering at once disgraceful to the Roman arms, and sickening to human nature, put a final period to the war in Galilee.

The Jewish nation were now divided into two very opposite parties: the one, forseeing that the war, if continued, would produce the ruin of their country, were desirous to end it by a speedy submission to the Romans: the other, who imbibed the principles of the Gaulonitish faction, delighted in nothing but

havoc, spoil and murder, and opposed all peaceable measures with an invincible obstinacy. This latter party, which was by far the most numerous and powerful, consisted of the vilest and most profligate characters—proud, cruel and rapacious; but, at the same time addicted to hypocrisy, they committed the most atrocious wickedness under the pretence of religion. In order to cut off every hope of accommodation, they had bound themselves by a solemn oath, never to lay down their arms till they had either extirpated all foreign authority, or perished in the attempt. The contrary party opposed them with arms, but were found unequal in the conflict, and suffered more from their countrymen than even from the exasperated Romans.

Jerusalem became the constant scene of blood and carnage. The ties of consanguinity and religion were no bar to the perpetration of the wildest outrages and butcheries.

So terrified by these horrid proceedings were the people, that they did not even dare to shed a tear or heave a sigh for the loss of their friends, nor even to bury their nearest relations. Nay, they were afraid even to weep or complain in their own houses or chambers, without first making a diligent search lest there should be any listeners; since any marks of compassion for the deceased would have been punished with death. Sometimes, indeed, they would throw a handful of earth on a dead body during the night, and a few persons were bold enough to do this during the day-time. No less than twelve thousand persons of some rank fell a sacrifice to this rage of party.

Thus the city of Jerusalem was oppressed by the aggravated misfortunes of war, tyranny and sedition. The populace imagining that war was the most insupportable of all calamities, fled from their habitations to seek for protection among strangers.

Vespasian, who had now daily news of the miserable condition of Jerusalem from the fugitives who constantly took shelter in his camp, felt concern for the unhappy situation of the inhabitants, and ordered his army to advance nearer to the city; not with the view, as was imagined, to attack it by a regular siege, but with a resolution to prevent any siege at all, by reducing all the fortresses in its neighborhood, and thereby obviating any obstruction to his future views.

He therefore pressed his conquests, till they extended over all Judea and Idumea. The whole region about Jerusalem was now in his hands, and he began to meditate leading his whole army against the city.

But at this juncture, the death of Nero, and the revolutions which rapidly succeeded it, occasioned a mighty change in the state of public affairs, and endangered the very existence of the Roman empire. The Jewish war was therefore now esteemed an object of but trifling consideration, and the several factions which

divided the Hebrew nation were left for some time at liberty, to tyrannize over the people, and to persecute each other with relentless fury.

Fresh factions broke forth, and raged with unrelenting fury in and about the city. To recount them were but a repetition of the same detail of crimes and woe, which we have just gone through, and which was fast hastening on the city to the full measure of its doom.

Vespasian was at this time, (69 A. C.) advanced to the empire of Rome. Josephus was set at liberty for having predicted his prosperity, and Titus was sent by his father to terminate the Jewish war.

He had, besides the three legions which had served under his father, the fifth legion, which had been so roughly handled by the Jews in Cestius' time, and now burned with a desire of revenge. Besides these, Agrippa, Soemus, and Antiochus, (the two former of whom accompanied him in person) and some allied cities, had furnished him with twenty regiments of foot, and eight of horse, besides vast multitudes of Arabs and a choice number of persons of distinction from Italy and other places, who came to signalize themselves under his standards. Titus ordered the fifth legion to take the road of Emmaus, the tenth that of Jericho, the other two legions followed him. It was now the beginning of April, and near the feast of the passover, to which there was a greater resort of the Jews than had ever been known, even from beyond the Euphrates.

The Romans, in the mean time, were drawing nearer the walls, having levelled, with great labor, all the surrounding space for many furlongs, pulling down the houses and hedges, cutting down the trees, and even cleaving the rocks, a work which, however arduous, they accomplished in four days. We shall here insert a brief description of Jerusalem, as given by Josephus.

Three celebrated walls surrounded the city of Jerusalem on every side, except on that part which was deemed inaccessible on account of the valley beneath; and, in this place, there was only one wall. This city was built on two hills, the one situated opposite to the other; and a deep valley lay between them, the whole of which was likewise built on. In regard to the strength of its situation, it originally received the name of Fortress, or Castle, from king David, the father of Solomon, who erected it; but the Upper Market was the name by which it was distinguished in more modern times.

The situation of the lower town was on the other hill, which was called by the name of Acra, round about which there was a declivity remarkably steep. Opposite to this there was formerly another hill not so high as the Acra, from which it was separated

by an extensive valley; but, during the power of the Asmonean princes, they caused this valley to be filled up, and detaching a part of the hill Acra, they united the town with the temple, in consequence of which it commanded and overlooked the adjacent parts.

Tyropæon was the name given to the above mentioned valley, which divided the upper from the lower town: this valley extended even to the fountain of Siloe, the waters of which were equally distinguished by their great abundance and the excellence of their flavor.

Without the city there were two other towns which were rendered almost inaccessible by the crags and precipices which surrounded them on every side.

The most ancient of the three walls was remarkable for its extraordinary strength, being erected on a hanging rock, and protected by the depth of the valley beneath it. Exclusive of the advantages of its natural situation, it was repeatedly strengthened at an immense expense, and by all the arts of industry, by David, Solomon, and a number of other princes.

At the gate called Genatha, which belonged to the former wall, the second wall commenced, and was carried on by the north side of the city to the fort Antonia.

The third wall was built by Agrippa as a protection to that part of the city which he had erected, which, before this wall was built, had been totally undefended. About this period, the city had so far increased in the number of its inhabitants, that it was unable to contain them; in consequence of which, a sort of suburbs were by degrees erected: and the buildings increased to a very great degree on the north side of the temple next the hill.

Opposite to the fort Antonia, there was a fourth mountain; but between this mountain and the fort, ditches of an amazing depth had been cut, so that it was impossible to come at the foundation of the fort so as to undermine it; and, exclusive of this advantage, the sinking of the ditches apparently added to the height of the tower. This fourth mountain received the name of Bezeth, or the New Town, being, in fact, nothing more than an addition to the former buildings. No sooner was this place well peopled, than the inhabitants requested that it might be fortified: whereupon Agrippa, the father of king Agrippa, adjusted his plan, and laid the foundation of the wall about it; but afterwards, on a more mature deliberation, he thought that Claudius Cæsar might possibly be offended at his undertaking a work of such importance and magnificence; wherefore Agrippa dropped the farther prosecution of his plan after he had laid the foundations: but if he had proceeded to have completed it, the capture of Jerusalem would have been rendered totally impracticable.

Titus now took a survey of the walls, to see where they might be approached with the greatest probability of success. He found that neither horse nor foot could make any penetration by way of the valleys; and he found that it would be equally fruitless to attempt an attack by batteries on the other side, owing to the strength of the wall: wherefore, after some deliberation, he concluded that the part of the line towards the sepulchre of John the high priest, would be best exposed to an attack, that it would not be a difficult enterprise to pass from this place to the third wall, and thence to the upper town; and, through these means, possessing themselves of Antonia, even to the temple.

While Titus was debating these things in his mind, and Josephus was executing all his oratory to prevail on the Jews to solicit a peace, an arrow was shot from a wall, which wounded Nicanor (an intimate friend of Titus,) in the left shoulder. This instance of the ingratitude of these people towards their friends, who would have advised them to peaceable measures, incensed Titus to such a degree, that he instantly resolved to make a formal attack on the town, and reduce it by force. Hereupon he ordered his soldiers to plunder the suburbs without loss of time, and to use the rubbish and ruins of what they should destroy, for platforms and other works. His army he separated into three divisions, assigning to each its proper duty. On the mounts in the midst of the main body, he stationed his archers and slingers, who were provided with engines to throw stones, and other missive annoyances, which answered the double purpose of keeping the enemy engaged on the walls, and of repelling their attacks. No time was lost in felling trees, and laying the suburbs bare; and the fortifications were made good with the timber thus obtained. In fact, on the part of the Romans, every hand was engaged, nor did the Jews lose their time in idleness.

The inhabitants, who had been heretofore so much exposed to the calamities of robbery and murder, finding the insurgents so earnestly engaged in defending themselves, began to conceive a hope that they should at length be at ease; flattering themselves, that if the Romans should be successful, they would enable them to do themselves justice, by revenging their own quarrel. The forces under the command of John opposed the besiegers vigorously; while himself in fear of Simon, dreaded to quit the temple. In the mean time, Simon, being stationed near the temple, was constantly in action. The shot and engines which he had heretofore taken from Cestius, and out of the fort Antonia, he placed along the wall: but his troops being unskilled in the use and management of these engines, made very little advantage of them: and this little arose from the knowledge they occasionally acquired from deserters. However, the Jews used their engines to assail the enemy from the ramparts with arrow

and stones; and occasionally they sallied forth and fought hand and hand with the Romans, who, on the contrary, defended their agents by jabions and hurdles. Each of the Roman legions was provided with extraordinary machines for repelling an attack of the enemy, particularly the tenth legion, which could throw larger stones and farther than any other. Each stone weighed a talent, and not only did execution on the spot, but even to the top of the ramparts. They would destroy at a furlong's distance, and a whole file fell before them wherever they came.

The works of the Romans were no sooner completed, than they took the distance between the mount and wall by a line and plummet; for this could not be effected in any other manner, owing to the shot and darts which were thrown down in abundance. When the place was found to be properly adapted for the battering rams, Titus directed that they might play with the greater convenience. In obedience to these orders, three batteries began to play at the same time on three different parts of the wall. The noise occasioned by these engines was heard in all parts of the city, and appeared not to be less dreaded even by the faction than it was by the citizens. At length the insurgents, though divided amongst themselves, finding that their danger was general, thought it might not be improper to unite in the defence of each other. Hereupon Simon despatched a herald to inform those who had enclosed themselves within the temple, that as many as were disposed to quit it and approach to the wall, had full permission so to do. The purport of this embassy did not strike John as a circumstance that could be relied on; but he permitted his people to act as their own inclinations might direct them.

The different factions united, and forgetting their old animosities, marched immediately in a body to the walls, where they had no sooner taken their stations, than they co-operated with their fires and other torches on the Roman engines, plying their darts and other weapons without intermission, on those who had the conducting of them. During the violence of this determined rage, great numbers of the Jews adventurously descended from the walls on the engines, the covers of which they tore off, and attacked the guards who were appointed to their defence.

At this juncture, Titus, who was never deficient in aiding his friends at a time of necessity, appointed a party of horse and archers to guard the machines, and find employment for the Jews on the walls, while the engineers should carry on their operations. This attack, however, had, for the present, very little effect: indeed the battering ram of the fifth legion shook the corner of a tower, which, being placed higher than the wall, the tower fell to the ground without bringing any of the wall with it.

Some time having passed since the Jews had made any sally, the Romans thought they were either tired or disheartened, and thereupon wandered about carelessly as in a state of security. This inattention on the part of the Romans being noticed by the Jews who were in the town, they rushed violently from a sally-port belonging to the tower Hippocus, set fire to the Roman works, and during the heat of the action, drove the Romans back to their own camp. The Romans assembled from all parts to the assistance of their associates. The Jews behaved with the most determined courage and intrepidity. By this time the fire had taken hold of the machines: and there is not a doubt but that they would all have been destroyed, with all those who attended on them, but for the critical arrival of a select party of Alexandrian troops, whose behaviour on the occasion cannot be sufficiently applauded, since it contributed in a great degree to the honor of the day. The proceedings of the Jews were impeded by these troops till the arrival of Titus with a body of cavalry. He killed twelve men with his own hands, and drove the remainder of the party into the city: and, by this enterprise, the engines were saved from destruction.

Nothing had hitherto been found so effectual for the harassing of the Jews as the turrets which the Romans had erected. On these they placed archers and slingers, and planted various sorts of machines; while the Jews could neither carry their platforms to a level with these towers, nor pull them down by reason of their solid construction, nor burn them, because they were plated with iron. All, therefore, that remained in the power of the Jews, was to keep at such a distance, as not to be wounded by the darts, arrows, and stones of the Romans; for it was fruitless for them to think of opposing the force of the battering-rams, which by degrees effected the purpose for which they were designed. The Romans were possessed of one ram dreadful in its execution, which the Jews distinguished by the name of "Nicon," or "Conqueror," the first breach having been made thereby.

The Jews had now been at hard duty during the whole night, and were extremely fatigued by fighting and watching. Thus dispirited, they came to too hasty a determination to abandon the first wall, as they had yet two others to depend on for their security. The Romans became masters of the first wall on the seventh day of the month Artemesius, and destroyed a great part of this wall, and also the northern quarter of the city, which very quarter had heretofore been ravaged by Cestius.

This being done, Titus withdrew to a place known by the name of the Assyrian's camp, possessing himself of all between that and the valley of Cedron, the distance of which, from the second wall, is something more than a bow shot. From this place he came to a resolution of beginning his attack, and im-

mediately commenced his operations. The Jews took their stations in a regular order on the wall, where they made a formidable opposition. John and his associates commanded the troops in the fortress of Antonia, and from the sepulchre of Alexander on the north of the temple. From the monument of John, the high priest, to the gate by which water is conveyed to the tower Hippochus, Simon and his people held the command. A number of resolute sallies were made by the Jews, in which they came to close quarters with the Romans; but the military knowledge of the latter was more than a counterpoise to the desperation of the Jews, who were repulsed with considerable loss: yet on the walls the Jews had the advantage. Skill and good fortune equally favored the Romans; while the Jews, from a native hardness, and an animation arising from despair, seemed insensible to danger or fatigue. It should be observed that the Romans were now fighting for glory, and the Jews for life and security, each party equally disdaining to yield. They were continually employing themselves either in violent assaults or desperate sallies, and combats of every kind. Their labors commenced with the day, and they were separated only by the darkness of the night; and even during the night both parties kept watching to protect their walls and the other their camp: they continued all night under arms, and were ready for battle by break of day. On this occasion the Jews despised danger and death, so much that they seemed emulous who should brave them most undauntedly, as the best recommendation to their superiors. They entertained so great a fear of and veneration for Simon, that they would have sacrificed their lives at his feet, on the slightest intimation that such a sacrifice would be agreeable to him.

The tower on the north side of the city was the object against which the battering ram was now directed. They who defended this tower were assailed by Titus with such repeated flights of arrows, that every one of them abandoned his post, except a crafty Jew of the name of Castor, and ten of his associates, who concealed themselves behind the battlements. These having remained quiet for a considerable time, at length felt a shock by the force of which the tower appeared to be shaking to its foundations. On this alarm they quitted their present station; when Castor, assuming the language, manner, and behaviour of a suppliant, entreated that Titus would pardon all that was past, and grant him quarter. Titus, willing to believe that the Jews were now tired of war, directed that his archers should cease their operations, and that the battery should play no longer: at the same time informing Castor, that if he had any proposals to make, he was willing to attend to what he had to say. To this Castor said, that it was his utmost ambition to commence a treaty; and Titus replied, "I grant it with all my heart: and if all

your companions coincide with you in sentiment, I am freely disposed to extend my pardon to you." This offer being made, five out of the ten who associated with Castor pretended to join with him in opinion, while the other five exclaimed that they would never submit to live slaves, while it was in their power to die freemen. A stop was put to all hostilities, while this dispute was in agitation. In the mean time Castor sent privately to Simon desiring that he would make the best advantage of the present opportunity, and submit to his management the best method of amusing the Roman general, under pretence of recommending terms of peace to his associates. In a word, Castor acted his part with so much artifice, that swords were drawn, mutual blows passed, and the men appeared to be killed; but the whole device was founded in falsehood and dissimulation.

Titus and his people were astonished at the stubborn obstinacy and persevering resolution of the Jews; and at the same time, entertained a generous compassion for their distress; but having the disadvantage of the ground, they could not be proper judges of what was done above them. At this juncture Castor received a wound in his nose from an arrow; but immediately drawing it out, he showed it to Titus seeming thereby to demand justice. Titus was so highly enraged at this injury, he turned to Josephus, who stood near him, desiring that he would go immediately, in his name to Castor, and give him all possible assurances of friendship and fair treatment. Josephus, however, not only desired to be excused from executing this commission, but likewise dissuaded his friends who would have undertaken it, assuring them that this apparent submission was founded in the deepest treachery. However, notwithstanding what was said, Æneas, one who had deserted to the Romans, seemed willing to undertake this expedition, to which he was the rather encouraged by Castor's directing him to bring something in which to put a sum of money that he intended to compliment him with. Thus encouraged by the hope of advantage, Æneas advanced to accept the present, when Castor let fall a large stone from the wall, and Æneas narrowly escaped being crushed by it, while it wounded the man who stood next to him.

From this circumstance, Titus was aware of the ill consequences that might arise from benevolence ill-timed: and was convinced that determined rigor ought to be opposed to plausible pretensions and fair promises. He thereupon began to ply his batteries with greater violence than heretofore, in order to revenge himself for the contumacious affront that had been offered him by Castor and his associates. When the batteries had played some time, Castor and his people found that the tower shook under them, and appeared to be on the point of falling; on which they set it on fire, and, running through the flames escaped into a

vault. The Romans imagined that by this action they had devoted themselves to certain destruction, and were generous enough to extol their courage and magnanimity to the skies.

Titus took possession of this part of the wall at the end of five days from the time that he had became master of the first. As the passage to the second wall was now opened, he had made the Jews fly before him; and having selected a hundred of his best troops, he entered the city at that quarter inhabited by the salesmen, clothiers and brasiers, and passed up the narrow cross streets to the wall. Titus, however, either from negligence or compassion, omitted to break down the wall, and thus, as we shall soon hear, lost the advantage of his victory.

No sooner had Titus entered the town, than he issued his orders that not a single house should be burnt, nor even one prisoner put to the sword. He was so indulgent likewise even to those of the faction, that he offered to permit them to end their own disputes among themselves, on the single condition, that they should not oppress the inhabitants. To these last, likewise, he promised that he would support them in all their legal possessions, and that what had been taken from them by violence should be restored.

These terms were highly agreeable to a majority of the people, of whom some wished that the city might be spared for their own sakes, and others that the temple might be spared for the sake of the city. However, the abandoned part of the faction ascribed all the generous benevolence and humanity of Titus, to fear; and they argued in this manner, that Titus would never have offered such favorable terms, if he had not himself despaired of accomplishing the work he had undertaken; and the faction now threatened instant death to any person who should propose peace, or a treaty of reconciliation.

No sooner had the Romans entered the city, than the Jews did all in their power to obstruct their proceedings; they blocked up the narrow passages, shot at them from the houses, making frequent sallies from the walls, and often compelled the guards to abandon the towers, and seek refuge in the camp. The soldiers within the city were in the utmost confusion; and those without were agitated to the highest degree, on account of the apprehended fate of their companions. Several smart encounters ensued between the opposing parties; but the Jews being more numerous than the Romans, and likewise better acquainted with the bye-ways and secret passes, they obtained frequent advantages: the breaches being likewise too narrow for any number to march out abreast, the Romans would have been pressed to such a degree, that scarcely a man of them would have escaped, if Titus had not arrived in the critical conjuncture; and this gallant officer placed a band of archers at the end of every street, was him-

self present in every place of the greatest danger, and being seconded by Domitius Sabinus, (a gallant man who performed singular feats of courage on the occasion,) the Jews were so annoyed by darts and lances, that the Romans had an opportunity of bringing off their men. Thus were the Romans driven from the second wall after they had gained possession of it.

This piece of success gave such spirits to the most determined of the inhabitants, that they flattered themselves that the Romans would not again venture to attack them; or that if they did, it would be totally impossible to subdue them: whereas, if these desperate men had not labored under an actual infatuation, they must have reflected that the Romans, over whom they had at present obtained an advantage, were not to be compared with the immense numbers that were yet to be encountered. The Romans having once gotten possession of the wall, and then lost it, made another attempt to recover it. They made repeated and almost constant assaults, for the space of three successive days, during which period they were repulsed with as much valor as they showed in the attack: but Titus made so furious a charge on the fourth day, that his opponents were no longer able to resist his force; whereupon he took possession of the wall, the northern part of which he destroyed, and in all the towers to the southward he placed garrisons without loss of time.

The storming of the third wall was now an object that engaged the attention of Titus; but he did not deem it a work that would be attended with much difficulty; he first considered how, by more lenient methods, he might bring the people to consider their true interest; hoping that they might be induced to listen to him, through the dread of his power and the fear of famine; for by this time, their plunder and provision were nearly consumed; while, on the contrary, the forces under Titus were supplied with every thing they could desire for their ease and accommodation. This being the case, Titus issued orders that, on a day of general muster, his troops should be drawn up and paid within view of the enemy. On this occasion the infantry advanced with drawn swords, and the led horses were adorned in so splendid a manner, that gold and silver seemed to prevail over all the field. This sight was equally agreeable to the Romans, as disgusting to the Jews, who had assembled in immense numbers on the old wall, on the north side of the city; the houses were likewise crowded, and every part of the city was filled with people gazing at this splendid spectacle. In fact the courage of the bravest among the Jews, was repressed by the appearance; and, in all probability, they would have now submitted to the Romans, had it not been for the consciousness that they had offered provocation of such a nature as not to be readily pardoned; and that if they abandoned the point in dispute, they must be devoted to certain

destruction; wherefore, rather than submit to be sacrificed at present, they chose rather to fall in the bed of honor by the chance of war. But, in fact, Providence had so determined, that the faction was to prove the ruin of the city, and the innocent were to be involved in the consequence of the crimes of the guilty.

After four days spent without any act of hostility, in procuring provisions for the camp, Titus, on the fifth day separated his army into two divisions; and, finding that the Jews were not in the least disposed to make peace, he caused works to be thrown up against the forts of Antonia, near the monument of John, in the hope that from that quarter he might get possession of the upper town, and then from Antonia become possessed of the temple; for it was impossible to keep possession of the city, unless the fort was taken. He made separate attacks against each of these two places; and at every rising ground he placed a legion of soldiers to defend and protect the engineers. Those who carried on their works near the monument, were violently assaulted by the Jews, and the people under the command of Simon; while those who besieged the fort Antonia were still more vigorously opposed by the party of John, and the zealots under his direction; for these had the advantage of the higher ground, and were also supplied with machines, of the use of which they were now perfectly acquainted, in consequence of daily practice. The zealots had likewise possession of forty slings for stones, and three hundred cross-bows, by which the Romans were much annoyed, and a check was given to their proceedings.

Though Titus had hitherto entertained no doubt but that he should make a complete conquest of the city, yet, while on the one hand he continued to urge the siege, he, on the contrary, joined to the power of force every effort of persuasion and advice, in order to induce the Jews to a compliance with the terms of reason. Reflecting that an appeal to the passions had sometimes a better effect than that to the law of arms, he, in the first place, personally addressed the Jews, requesting that they would have so much regard to their interests, as to surrender a place of which he could make himself master at any time. This done, he committed the rest to Josephus; thinking that when they were addressed by their own countryman, and in a language familiar to them, success would probably be the consequence of the humanity which inspired him to undertake so benevolent an office. Agreeably to the directions given by Titus, Josephus first walked through several parts of the city, and then stopping on an elevated spot within hearing of the enemy, though not within reach of their shot, he made a long and eloquent speech, in which he urged every argument he could think of in order to induce them to surrender.

Josephus wept abundantly at the recital of his own speech; but it appeared to make no impression on the opposing faction, who did not think that they could, with safety, agree to the terms offered by the Romans, even if they had been disposed so to have done. But of the common people, many were so impressed with that most effectual means of consulting their safety by flight; and, for this purpose, they sold all their most valuable effects, though at prices greatly inferior to their real worth; and swallowed the gold they received as the purchase money, lest they should be stripped of it in their journey. Thus provided, they repaired to the Romans, where they were supplied with what they wanted. In the interim, Titus permitted the deserters to enjoy their full liberty, which was an encouragement to others to desert, as they avoided the misfortunes of those in the city, without being subjected to the enemy. However, Simon and John, and their adherents, placed guards at all the outlets, and were not less assiduous to keep the citizens from departing, than the Romans from making an entrance. The least cause of suspicion was sufficient to deprive a man of his life, or even a pretence on which to found a suspicion had the same effect. Persons in affluent circumstances were certain to be sufferers: those who had any thing to lose were assuredly suspected, and that suspicion ended in their final destruction.

The factions now became more tumultuous, and the famine daily increased. When corn was no longer offered for sale, they broke open houses in search of it; and if none was discovered, the owners were tortured to make them declare where their stores were deposited; and if it was discovered, they were severely punished for concealing it. At length, such was the distress, that the people in tolerable circumstances disposed of their whole effects for a bushel of wheat, and the poorer people for an equal quantity of barley. The purchases being made, they secluded themselves from all observation, when some of them began to eat the corn before it was ground, while others waited till it was baked, according to the different degrees of their hunger.

Whenever the inhabitants saw a house shut up, they concluded that the people in it had something to eat: wherefore, breaking it open, they seized the meat even from the mouths of the persons who were swallowing it. Neither age nor sex was spared: the old men, who endeavored to defend the provision they possessed, were violently beaten; while the women, who sought to conceal any thing, were dragged by their hair. Even children at the breast escaped not the general fury; so that the same treatment attended infancy and old age.

No kind of cruelty was omitted in the search for food: persons were tormented in the most exquisite manner, and in those parts

the most sensible of pain. Sharp sticks were thrust up their bodies; and they were otherwise so severely treated, that the recital would give horror: and all this, perhaps, in order to discover a handful of flour, or a loaf of bread, which had been concealed.

Such was the treatment that the common people received from soldiers; but persons of a superior degree were carried before the usurpers, who directed that some of them should be put to death on a charge of treason, false witnesses being continually produced to swear that they had an intention of betraying the city to the Romans. Those who had been plundered by Simon were carried to John, and the prisoners brought to John were transmitted to Simon, as if they had mutually agreed to triumph in the distresses of their fellow-creatures.

Titus plied his operations with incessant assiduity, in the course of which he lost many men by shots from the walls. The Jews had a practice of quitting the city during the night, in search of the necessaries of life; and, in these excursions, they were often attended by soldiers, who could not obtain within the city sufficient to satisfy the demands of nature.

These circumstances being well known to Titus, he sent a party of his cavalry to wait for the Jews in the valleys; and these latter, being reduced to despair, through hunger, fell into the snare laid by the enemy. When they found their unfortunate situation, they were compelled to fight, in the dread of a punishment even worse than death in battle; and, in fact, it was now too late for them to think of demanding quarter. In a word, the Jews were subdued; and having first been put to a variety of tortures, were crucified in sight of their brethren who were besieged. The exertion of this rigor was disagreeable to Titus; but he hoped that the terrible example might tend to influence those within the city to avoid a similar fate. Yet this horrid spectacle was so far from having its proper influence on the faction, that it wrought an effect directly contrary to what was intended; for the friends and relations of the fugitives, and all those who seemed inclined to listen to terms of accommodation, were compelled to come down to the walls, and observe what was to be expected by those who deserted to the Romans; and, on this occasion, it was insisted that the sufferers were not prisoners of war, but deserters who had made their submission and implored mercy. By this contrivance many were prevented from going off till the fact came to be known; though there were numbers who escaped to the enemy, in the mere dread of being starved, which they considered a more deplorable death than that of crucifixion.

Hereupon Titus gave orders that several of the prisoners should have their hands cut off, and in this condition he sent them to John and Simon, so that it was not possible that they should be

mistaken for deserters: and by these people he sent his advice, that an end might be put to the war, before he should be absolutely compelled to destroy the city; intimating that the Jews, on a proper submission, had yet an opportunity of preserving their lives, their country, and their temple. In the mean time, however, Titus did not neglect to forward his works, encouraging those who labored on them to be indefatigable, having determined that his preparations should be followed by convincing proofs, that what was not to be effected by the laws of reason, should yield to those of force.

The Romans began their platforms on the twelfth day of the month Artemisius; and after seventeen days of incessant labor, completed them on the twenty-ninth. There were four of these platforms, and they were works of a very capital nature. One of them, which was near the fortress of Antonia, was constructed by the fifth legion, opposite the middle of the Struthian Pool: the twelfth legion threw up another at the distance of twenty cubits from the former: opposite to the pool named Amygdalon, another work was thrown by the tenth legion, which was more numerous than the other legions: and a fourth mount was erected by the fifteenth legion, at a small distance from the monument erected to the memory of John the high-priest.

As soon as the works above mentioned were completed, John gave directions for digging a mine under that facing Antonia, and that a number of props should support the earth from falling. This being done, the wood work was covered with a bituminous inflammable matter; after which, John ordered that the pillars should be fired; and the props being destroyed, the whole fortification fell to the ground with a hideous crash. At first, no fire appeared, only dust and smoke, till at length the flames burst forth to view. The Romans were astonished at the sight, and perfectly distracted to think that their views were thus defeated on the moment that they thought themselves certain of success. As their ramparts were destroyed, they conceived that it would be fruitless to attempt to quench the fire.

Two days after this circumstance, Simon and his associates made an attempt on the other two mounts, where the Romans had by this time planted their battering-rams, and began their operations. Jepthæus, a Galilean, of the city of Gasis; Megassarus, a domestic of Queen Mariamne; and Agiras (otherwise the lame,) the son of Nabatæus of Adiabene, greatly distinguished themselves on this occasion. They ran with torches in their hands, and forcing their way through the troops of the enemy with as much unconcern as if there had been no opposition, they set fire to the works; and though they were opposed by darts and arrows, they resolutely persevered in their intention till the whole erection was in a flame. These three men were esteemed among the bravest that took part in the war.

Such numbers from without the city now came in as reinforcements to the Jews, that this additional aid gave them such fresh spirits and courage, that, flushed with the hope of conquest, they advanced even to the camp, and made an attack on the guards. The office of the Roman guards, according to the strictness of their discipline, was to perform their duty, alternately relieving each other; and the man who quitted his station, under any pretence whatever, was certain of suffering death without mercy. Thus assured from the very nature of their station, that they must suffer the infamous death of deserters if they did not fall like men of honor, they made so resolute an opposition, that some of those who had fled, thought themselves under a necessity of returning; when they made such resistance by means of their engines, that the excursions of the Jews from the city were stopped. These Jews had sallied forth with the utmost fury, unprovided even with weapons for their defence, attacking all they met without distinction, rashly rushing among their enemies, and throwing themselves on the points of their pikes. In a word, the advantages the Jews at any time gained over the Romans, were less acquired by real courage than rash precipitancy: while the Romans, little afraid of any essential injury the Jews could do them, often yielded to the violent impetuosity of their opponents.

When Titus returned from Antonia, where he had been to fix on a proper spot for carrying on the siege, he severely reprimanded the troops for permitting themselves to be attacked in their own works, when they had possessed themselves of those of the enemy, and yielding to be besieged by those who could be considered as no other than prisoners. After this, Titus made a selection of some of his best troops, and, surrounding the Jews, charged them in the flank; while they, on the other hand, sustained the charge with astonishing resolution. The Romans were so enraged, partly from a sense of military honor, and partly from a concern for the safety of their general, who was in imminent danger, that if the Jews had not retreated to the city in the very moment that they did, every one of them would have been utterly destroyed. Still, however, the Romans were hurt at the reflection of having lost their bulwarks, and that what they had been so long in erecting, should be demolished almost in an hour. In consequence of this disappointment, the Romans began to despair of accomplishing their design.

During this situation of affairs, Titus issued orders that his principal officers should be summoned to a council, to advise him how to act in the emergency. Some of the most violent among them recommended an immediate attack with the whole army, and coming to a general battle. Those of more reflection gave their voices for the re-erection of the ramparts: while a third party were of opinion that famine would effectually do the busi-

ness, and that victory might be obtained without a blow being struck.

Though Titus did not think it perfectly honorable to lie inactive at the head of so large an army, yet he was not disposed to attack a people who sought their own destruction with such determined resolution. The want of materials rendered it impracticable that he should erect new ramparts; and with regard to the preventing provisions being carried into the city, he thought it would be equally impossible, on account of the extent of the place and the number of avenues. He reflected, that if the Jews should, by stealth, convey any relief into the city, it would tend only to protract the siege, and the delay thereby occasioned would lessen the honor of the victory.

He directed his officers immediately to begin the erection of the wall, and let the whole army take a share in the business, assigning to each party its proper station. These orders were no sooner issued, than every soldier was animated with a wish to exceed his fellows in this work. The ground was measured out, the legions were divided, and every man was emulous who should most effectually distinguish himself. The common soldiers copied the example of the serjeants, the serjeants that of the captains, the captains that of the tribunes, and the tribunes that of their superior officers; the whole being under the direction of Titus, whose zeal for the despatch of this business was such, that he was continually taking his rounds to superintend the whole proceeding.

Nine and thirty furlongs was the whole extent of this wall, and thirteen forts were erected on the outside of it, ten furlongs being the compass of each fort. It is somewhat extraordinary, but no less so than true, that this amazing work was completed in three days, though an equal number of months might have been supposed a reasonable time for it. As soon as it was finished, garrisons were placed in all the forts, who did duty under arms every night. On each night, likewise, Titus went the first round in person; Tiberius Alexander, the second; and the officers who commanded the legions, the third. Some persons were constantly on guard in the forts during the whole night: but some of the soldiers were allowed to rest alternately with others who were appointed to watch.

The above mentioned enclosure of the Jews within the town, reduced them to the last degree of despair; for by this time the famine had increased to such a height, that whole families fell a sacrifice to its rage. The dead bodies of women and children were seen in every house: the old men were found dead in all the narrow lanes of the city; while the younger men, who were yet able to walk, appeared like ghosts parading the streets. It became impossible to commit the bodies of the dead to the ground.

Many of the living were unable to perform this charitable office; while others were unwilling to take it, partly discouraged by the numbers of the deceased, and partly by the reflection that themselves could not survive any considerable time. Numbers of them expired even while they were burying their fellow-citizens; and some, prompted by despair, sought their own graves, and interred themselves, that they might be certain of a place of repose. Yet miserably distressful as the present situation of these wretches was, not a single complaint or lamentation was heard: for the pangs of excessive hunger absorbed every other passion. They who last expired beheld those who had gone before them with unweeping eyes, and looks marked with the near approach of death. The most profound silence reigned through every part of the city; and during the course of the night, heaps of dead bodies were frequently piled on each other. When offensive smells, arising from the corruption of the dead bodies, became insupportable, an order was given that all of them should be buried at the public expense: the abandoned incendiaries threw them from the walls into the valleys; a sight that occasioned so much horror to Titus, that, while he was going his rounds, and found the ditches infected with dead bodies, and pestilential vapors arising from them, he extended his hands towards heaven, and made a solemn appeal to God, that these misfortunes arose not from any orders that he had given.

The insurgents were now so pent up within the walls, that they found it impossible for any of them to quit the place. In the mean time, they endured all the pangs of famine, aggravated by the tortures of despair; while, on the contrary, the Romans lived at their ease, and passed their time very agreeably, being amply supplied with the necessaries of life from Syria and the adjacent provinces. Encouraged by their better fortune, many of the Romans advanced to the walls and made an ostentatious display of their provisions, with a view to reflect on the necessities of those who were in circumstances of distress. All this appeared to have no effect on the unfeeling minds of the seditious multitude: whereupon Titus, in mere compassion to the residue of an unhappy people, determined immediately on the erection of new works, and resolved that no time should be lost in their completion. One considerable difficulty indeed now occurred, which was the providing the proper materials for carrying these works into execution; for all the wood in the neighborhood of the city had been cut down for the erection of the former works wherefore, they were under a necessity of fetching all the timber for this second supply, from a place of ninety furlongs; and herewith four ramparts of greater magnitude than the former, were erected at the fortress Antonia. Titus carried on this business with great assiduity, and the besieged being now at his

mercy, he plainly hinted to them that he knew their situation. Still, however, they showed no concern for what had happened: they seemed to have no regard for themselves or each other. Those who were decaying with sickness they confined in prisons, and tore the dead in pieces as dogs would have done.

The ungrateful return which Matthias received from Simon, for procuring him to be admitted into the city, was, that he first caused him to be tortured, and then put to death. The venerable old man made it his earnest request, and the only favor he asked in return for his admitting Simon into the town, that he himself might first suffer; but even this poor favor was denied by Simon. He was put to death on the bodies of his sons, and and within view of the Romans, agreeably to an order given to Ananus, the son of Barnadus; which Ananus was distinguished from all the dependents of Simon by the extreme cruelty of his disposition.

About the same time, several other distinguished personages were put to death, the father of Josephus imprisoned, and himself wounded by a stone. At this juncture, a number of the inhabitants went off to the Romans. Some of them deserted under pretence of pursuing the enemy with stones; while others made their escape by leaping over the walls. But the most melancholy part of the history remains yet to be recounted.

Among the Syrians, a fugitive Jew was discovered while he was searching for gold, which he had swallowed, and which had passed through his body. At the period above mentioned, there was a very great scarcity of gold in the town, and twelve attics were as valuable as twenty-five had been in former times; and the faction had searched all the people in the strictest manner. On the above mentioned discovery, it was immediately reported through the camp that the Jews who had deserted had swallowed all the gold. Hereupon the Arabians and Syrians seized on the deserters, and cut open the bodies of two thousand of them in one night. This Josephus deems to have been the most inhuman butchery that ever was perpetrated on the Jews.

The horrid inhumanity of this action gave so much offence to Titus, that he would undoubtedly have ordered his cavalry to destroy every one of the offenders with darts, if their number had not been more considerable than that of those they had murdered: but as this was the case, he summoned together his officers, as well the Romans as the auxiliaries, and addressed them with severity on the act; and finding that some of his own people had been concerned in this inhuman butchery, he delivered his sentiments on the occasion in the following manner: In the first place, addressing himself to the Romans, he said, "I am astonished that any soldier of mine should be guilty of an action so unmanly, in order to possess himself of so uncertain an ad-

vantage, without blushing at the meanness to which he had been induced by his avarice." Then turning to his auxiliaries, he exclaimed, "Do you think it reasonable that the insolences offered, and the inhumanities perpetrated by the Syrians and Arabians in a foreign war, in which they act without control, ought to be imputed to the Romans? and that the crimes of one party ought to be laid to the charge of the other?"

Titus, so far from excusing, was transported to the highest degree of rage at their conduct, and threatened immediate death to any man who should be guilty of similar acts of barbarity for the future. At the same time, he gave orders to his legions to make a strict search after every person who should be suspected, and declared that he himself would sit in judgment on his trial. What Titus prohibited publicly with such severity, was repeatedly practised in secret on the deserters from the Jews. Their mode of proceeding only was varied; for when any of the deserters were taken, the custom of the murderers was first to be assured that they were not within view of any of the Romans, and then to rip up the bodies of the Jews in search of treasure, though they were seldom successful in finding the money sought after by these infamous means. However, the shocking practice had such an effect on the Jews, that they now no longer deserted to the Romans, being apprehensive of the fatal consequences that would ensue.

John having obtained all he could by plunder, then proceeded to sacrilege, seizing and appropriating to his own use several cups, dishes, tables, and other necessary vessels appropriated to divine service, which had been presented as gifts, or offered as oblations, not excepting even the pieces dedicated to the honor of the temple by Augustus and the empress. The Roman emperors had ever entertained a great esteem and veneration for the temple, though at this time it was profaned by a Jew, who stripped it of the presents bestowed on it by strangers, and encouraged his companions to make free with every thing that was sacred, saying, "It was but reasonable that those should live by the temple who had fought for it." In pursuance of these sentiments, he made no scruple of distributing among his people the holy wine and oil, which had been reserved for sacrifices in the interior part of the temple: and as John was free in his distributions, the people were equally free in receiving them, drinking and anointing without ceremony.

The Romans were put to great difficulty in procuring the necessary materials for completing their works; but they cut down all the woods within the circuit of ninety furlongs of the city, and finished their platforms in the space of twenty-one days. A most dismal alteration took place in this delightful part of Judea, which abounded in curious gardens, plantations, and houses of

pleasure: not a building or tree was now to be seen, but the marks of devastation and ruin occupied the whole prospect. So great was the difference between the present and the former state of Jerusalem, that even strangers could not refrain from tears on the comparison. So terrible was the devastation and havoc of the war, that people in the heart of the city might reasonably have inquired where Jerusalem, that place so peculiarly favored by heaven, was situated.

The Romans having raised the mounts, the Jews became greatly alarmed; for matters were now arrived to such an extremity, that they were conscious they must inevitably surrender the city, if their endeavors to destroy the Roman works proved ineffectual; on the other hand, the Romans were exceedingly apprehensive lest the attempts of their adversaries should prevail; for the wood of the adjacent parts of the country being wholly exhausted, and the men greatly harassed by incessant and hard duty, if the mounts were destroyed, all hope of success must end, since there appeared no possibility of constructing other works.

Notwithstanding the enmity subsisting between the parties, the Romans were more concerned on account of the miseries of the Jews, than they were themselves. In despite of all the difficulties and dangers they had undergone, and the prospect of what they had still to encounter, the Jews preserved their spirits, and resolution. The Romans now doubled the number of their guards, and took such other precautions as occasion required.

Before the rams were mounted, no measures that were likely to prove effectual were omitted by John and his adherents, who guarded the castle of Antonia to prevent a breach being made in the walls. They made a sally with a view of setting fire to the mounts; but they went out in small parties, and they did not act with that courage and unanimity which was usual to the Jews. Their measures were not well concerted, nor were they carried into execution with the necessary spirit, to which may be attributed the failure of their design. The Romans became unusually vigilant, and lest their works should be set on fire, they planted a strict guard upon the bulwarks, and adopted such other precautionary measures as were necessary for preventing any disadvantages being taken by the enemy. Rather than submit to the irreparable injury of relinquishing their advantageous station, they unanimously resolved to die in defending the mounts. They considered that the honor of the Roman name would incur indelible disgrace if they suffered their courage and discipline to be baffled by the headstrong impetuosity of a desperate and outrageous multitude; and to submit to the power of the Jews was a circumstance that they could not reflect upon with any tolerable degree of patience.

The Romans were prepared with darts to encounter the enemy as they advanced: and such of the foremost as were slain or wounded, obstructed the progress and damped the courage of their companions. They who pressed forward were astonished and deterred, upon observing the exact regularity of the Roman discipline; others were alarmed at the great numbers of the enemy; and they who were wounded availed themselves of the first opportunities that offered for effecting an escape. In short, all the Jews retired, each man endeavoring to preserve himself from censure by attributing the common calamity to the misconduct of his companions.

The Jews having retreated on the first day of the month Panemus, the Romans advanced their rams, in order to batter the walls of the castle Antonia. To prevent the approach of the engines, the Jews had recourse to their swords, fire, stones, and such other means as were likely to prove effectual; and they defended themselves with singular resolution: they greatly depended on the walls being sufficiently strong to resist the force of the machines; but still they exerted every possible effort to prevent their being advanced and placed in a manner proper for action. Hence the assailants concluded that the great activity of the Jews proceeded from a consciousness of Antonia being in danger. For a considerable time the battery was continued without effect; but despairing of being able to effect a breach by means of their engines, the Romans applied themselves to mining, carefully guarding themselves with their buckles from the stones, lances, and other weapons discharged from above. With immense labor, they at length loosened four stones of the foundation.

The night now arrived, and both parties retired to repose. In the mean time, that part of the wall which John had undermined, with a view of destroying the former works, suddenly gave way. This unexpected event had a contrary effect upon the contending parties. The Jews, who, by a proper attention, might have prevented the accident, were but little concerned when it arrived; for they deemed the place to be still sufficiently secure. The Romans were greatly rejoiced at a circumstance so favorable to their views as the falling of the wall; but their transports abated, upon observing a wall which John had constructed within the circuit of that wherein the breach appeared. They still, however, entertained hopes of conquering the place; for the ruins of the outward wall greatly facilitated access to the other, which was not yet sufficiently settled and hard to make any considerable resistance to the force of the battering rams. The assailants judged that instant death would inevitably be the fate of those who should attempt to scale the walls; and therefore all thoughts

of that exploit were declined, unless by one Sabinus, who lost his life in the attempt.

Two days being elapsed, twenty of the guards of the platforms, the ensign of the fifth, two cavaliers, and a trumpeter assembled; and in the dead of the night these people silently advanced over the ruins of the wall to Antonia. They marched without meeting the least obstruction; and finding the advanced guard oppressed asleep, they cut their throats; and having gained possession of the wall, the trumpeter sounded his instrument, which aroused the rest of the guard, who were thrown into so great a consternation, that they instantly fled, being ignorant that only a small number of the enemy had entered the place, but strongly possessed of the opinion that they were exceedingly numerous.

Upon receiving intimation of the state of affairs at the fort, Titus put himself at the head of his most resolute troops, and immediately marched thither over the ruins already mentioned. So astonished were the Jews at this sudden and unexpected attack, that some fled for safety to the interior of the temple, and others to the mine that John had formed with a view of destroying the Roman works. The factions under the command of John and Simon were convinced that every prospect of success must end, if the enemy obtained possession of the temple: and hereupon a desperate engagement ensued before the doors of the sacred building; one party fighting for the preservation of life, and the other for the honor of conquest. Neither party could use lances or darts with effect: for they were so closely engaged, that the sword was the only weapon on which the issue of the battle was to depend. Jews and Romans were promiscuously crowded together, and neither order or discipline was observed; but the utmost confusion prevailed.

The encounter was maintained for the space of ten hours, being commenced at the expiration of the ninth hour of the night, and not concluded till the end of the seventh on the following morning. The determined rage of the Jews, however, proved too powerful for the discipline and bravery of the Romans; and that this was the case, proved a happy circumstance for the former, whose last advantage being at stake, had they been vanquished in this action, utter destruction to them must inevitably have been the consequence. The Romans judged that they had reason to be satisfied with the advantage they had acquired, in gaining possession of the fort Antonia: for they had performed the exploit with only a part of the army, the legions on whom the greatest dependence was placed not being yet arrived.

Having determined to break up the foundations of fort Antonia, and form a level passage for the more convenient march of his army, Titus, before he proceeded to that extremity, commis-

sioned Josephus to bring back the Jews to the exercise of their reason. His arguments were lost on the majority of his hearers; but prevailed with divers of those people who composed the faction. A considerable number of persons of rank revolted to the enemy. They experienced a most gracious and generous reception from Titus, and expressed the warmest sentiments of gratitude for the liberal treatment they had received from the Roman general.

When the faction observed that the fugitives were no longer to be seen from the city, they circulated a rumor that the Romans had put them to death. For some time, this stratagem had the desired effect, by deterring other Jews from following the example of the deserters: but being apprised of the design with which the report had been propagated, Titus recalled the deserters from Gophne, and ordered them to make the tour of the wall, attended by Josephus. The calumny being thus refuted, a still greater number of the people were induced to revolt to the Romans. Being assembled on this occasion within sight of the Romans, with tears and lamentations they supplicated the faction to preserve their country by admitting the Romans into the town; or, at least, to depart from the temple, rather than provoke the enemy to destroy it by fire, to which extremity they would not proceed, unless aggravated to adopt the measure by an inconsiderate perseverance in a fruitless opposition. This conduct served but to inflame the faction to a more extravagant degree of outrage.

Titus now determined to make an assault upon the Jews; but, at the same time, consented to remain in the fort of Antonia, where he might witness their operations without exposing his person. The attack commenced at three o'clock in the morning, when the Romans were deceived in the expectation they had formed of surprising the Jews while asleep: the advanced guards resolutely opposed the assailants, and, at the same time joined in a general shout, which awakening their companions, great multitudes immediately came to their support. The Romans bravely withstood the shock made by the advanced guard; and when the other Jews came up, a scene of horror took place: through the darkness of the night, the confused sound of voices, fear, and the impulse of rage, their consternation was so great, that they destroyed both friends and enemies without distinction; and the Jews who fell by the hands of their own countrymen, were considerably more numerous than those who were slain by the enemy. The loss on the part of the Romans was not great; for they preserved a regular discipline, carefully defended themselves with their bucklers, and had the advantage of knowing each other by means of the watch-word. Upon the appearance of day-light, the Jews discovered their error, and pursued the

encounter with more regularity. Each party now employed darts, arrows, and other weapons; and notwithstanding the contest that had been maintained in the night, they appeared to suffer no abatement of courage or strength.

The Romans, conscious that their general was posted in a station where he could form an exact judgment respecting the behaviour of his troops, and considering that their future prospects in life would depend on their conduct in the present action, fought with a noble emulation to surpass each other in martial exploits. The presence of John, who threatened, and even struck those of his people who appeared to be tardy in their duty, and encouraged the rest with promises of reward, added to the consideration that their own lives and the safety of the temple were at stake, induced the Jews to exert their utmost endeavors in opposing the enemy. Neither party was able to make any considerable retreat, the place not being sufficiently large for that purpose; and the battle was mostly maintained hand to hand, victory sometimes appearing to incline to one, and sometimes to the other side. The fort of Antonia was as a theatre, whence Titus and his friends commanded a full and perfect view of those who were actively engaged in the scene, urging the Romans resolutely to pursue the advantages they gained, and exhorting them firmly to maintain their ground when they appeared to be in danger of a repulse from the Jews, and giving such directions as circumstances required. In short, the contest continued from the ninth hour of the night to the fifth on the following day; and when it was concluded, so resolutely had the combatants maintained their ground, it could not be decided which party had gained the advantage.

Titus ordered the foundation of Antonia to be broken up to the very bottom; and, in the space of seven days, this work was completed, and a level passage formed for admitting the legions to march conveniently up to the walls. Titus now employed his troops in erecting four mounts; the first facing the angle of the interior temple that looks towards the north and east; a second against the gallery, to the northward between the two gates; a third toward the west porch; and the fourth towards the north porch of the outward temple. The works were not completed without great difficulty and expense; for the Romans were under the necessity of conveying what materials they had occasion for from places at an hundred furlongs distant from Jerusalem; and placing great confidence in their strength, they neglected to guard against surprises from the Jews, who, waiting for them on the way, frequently made desperate sallies from ambushes, and put them to considerable loss and inconvenience.

When the Romans went out in foraging parties, they frequently unbridled their horses, and turned them to graze; and when

opportunities offered, the Jews sallied forth, seized and carried off the animals. This being often repeated, Titus attributed the loss to the negligence of his troops, rather than to the enterprising spirit of the enemy. He was not deceived in his conjecture: for having caused one of his soldiers to be put to death as a punishment for losing his horse, no instance of the like nature occurred in future.

The platforms being now raised, and the Romans having made every other preparation necessary to the assault they had meditated, on the following day, a number of Jews belonging to the faction, who, being unable to procure the necessaries of life by their usual practice of pillage, and nearly on the point of starving, formed the resolution of attacking the Roman guards who were stationed on mount Olivet; and they advanced about the eleventh hour of the day, when they imagined their attempt would be most likely to succeed, as at that time it was usual for the enemy to take some respite from the fatigue of the day.

The Romans observing the approach of the seditious multitude, collected all their force in order to repulse them. A terrible contest ensued, in which great exploits were performed by both parties. The Romans founded their hopes of success on their superior knowledge in the art of war; and the furious rage and impetuosity of the Jews induced them to believe that they were able to succeed in the most desperate attempts. The valor of the one party was excited by the dread of shame, and that of the other, by the pressing exigency of their situation; for the Romans conceived that they should incur indelible disgrace if they did not revenge themselves upon the Jews for the insolent attempt they had made; and the Jews had no prospect of escaping the vengeance of the enemy but by mere dint of force.

Finding themselves considerably weakened by the losses sustained in divers combats, that the war daily raged with additional violence, and that the temple was in the most imminent danger of being destroyed, the Jews resolved to ruin a part of the sacred edifice, in order to preserve the rest, as it is usual to amputate the extremities, lest mortification should be communicated to the more noble parts of the body. They set fire to that part of the gallery extending from the north to the east, and facing the fort Antonia: and, in a short time, as much of the building as occupied a space of near twenty cubits was entirely consumed. Thus were the Jews the first who actually put the design in execution of effecting the destruction of the superb and holy structure, so deservedly celebrated throughout the universe.

Two days having elapsed, the Romans, on the twenty-fourth of the same month, set fire to the remaining part of the gallery; and when the flames had gained fourteen cubits, the Jews destroyed the roof, as well as every other matter which was likely to serve

as a communication with fort Antonia, though they might, had they been so inclined, have saved the place from the rage of the flames; but they were wholly regardless as to what course the mischief took, so it tended to promote their private views. During this time daily skirmishes took place in the neighborhood of the temple.

At this juncture, the faction in the temple, soldiers on the mounts, and the rest of the Jews, devised the following stratagem on the twenty-seventh day of the month above mentioned. They placed a large quantity of dry wood, sulphur, and bituminous matter, between the timbers and the top of the roof of the western porch; and then affecting to give way, as if an attack had been made on them, they retreated with every appearance of being driven out of a place of which they could no longer hold the possession. Hereupon, a number of their opponents pursued them closely with the utmost eagerness, and put up ladders to get possession of the place, which the others had abandoned: but they who reflected on the affair, deemed it to be a mere artifice, and therefore did not join in the pursuit.

As soon as the Romans had crowded into the porch, the Jews set it on fire, and the whole building was immediately in flames, to the horror and confusion of those who were within, and the astonishment of those who viewed the conflagration at a distance. Some of the unhappy people threw themselves into wells and pits; others leaped from the houses, and ran for their lives: others again were smothered in the flames, while others threw themselves on their swords to avoid a death still more dreadful.

Titus was greatly affected by this horrid sight, compassionating, in a high degree, the misfortunes arising from so fatal a miscarriage. In the mean time, he was highly offended at his soldiers for having embarked in such an enterprise without previously receiving his orders. They had, however, one satisfaction in the midst of their distress, to compensate for the loss of life; that they were pitied by the prince in whose service they suffered; for they could behold him giving his orders, and using his utmost endeavors to afford them relief; and all the evidences he gave of his regard were deemed memorials to his lasting honor. With regard to those persons who escaped the fury of the flames, they were attacked by the Jews, and every man of them was slain, after they had made all the resistance in their power.

The fire destroyed the porch as far as the tower which John had built, (during his war with Simon) on the pillars that led to his porch. After the Romans had been burnt by the Jews in the manner above recited, they destroyed the remainder of the building; and the following day, the Romans set fire to the north porch, and continued this fire to the porch facing the eastward

which commands the valley of Cedron, from a precipice, to take a downward view of which affords a prospect almost distracting.

Thus unhappily were affairs situated in the neighborhood of the temple. The extreme severity of the famine had almost depopulated the city, and the miseries consequent on this calamity are beyond all recital. The skins of beasts, leather girdles, and shoes, were eaten, and even a handful of old hay bore the price of four attics.

In the village named Vetezobra, (that is the house of Hyssop,) beyond the river Jordan, lived one Eleazar, who had a daughter named Mary. The family was rich, and their descent respectable. Now this Mary fled, in company with several other persons, and took refuge in Jerusalem, where it was their misfortune to be besieged. All the more valuable effects that this woman brought with her she was deprived of by the tyrants; and, with regard to such articles as she had concealed, whether goods or provisions, the soldiers frequently broke open her house and stole them from her. Irritated by this treatment, she reviled the faction in terms of the utmost acrimony; but no language of which she was mistress, however severe, could provoke any of this abandoned set to put her to death, either from motives of rage or pity. At length, tormented with the excruciating pangs of a devouring famine, from which she saw no possibility of escaping, having no farther means of sustaining life, and being abandoned to the utmost rage of despair, she determined on a resolution more horrible than it is in the power of language to describe.

She killed her infant; and, having boiled it, ate the half of it; and covering up the remainder, put it away. The circumstance of her dressing food soon came to the knowledge of the faction, some of whom went to the house of the woman, and threatened her with immediate death if she did not produce what provision she had in the house. Hereupon she fetched out that part of the child which still remained undevoured, and told them that was all the food she possessed.

This sight had such an effect on the spectators, that they at first appeared petrified with horror, then trembled at the idea of what had passed, and were shocked at the consequences to be dreaded from it. On this the woman addressed them as follows: "Be assured that this is my son, the half of whom I have eaten myself, and request that you will eat the remainder; I flatter myself that you will not pretend to have more delicacy than a woman, or more compassion than a mother. But if you refuse the oblation through scruples of conscience, you are welcome to leave the food where you found it, only remember that I have eaten a part of it already." She had no sooner ended speaking, than they departed with evident signs of terror,

leaving, though against their inclinations, the remainder of the child with the unfortunate mother; the only circumstance of their whole conduct attended with any degree of delicacy.

This shocking deed became immediately the subject of conversation throughout the whole city: and every man appeared to detest the crime as much as if he himself had been immediately concerned in it. The tale soon spread from the Jews to the Romans, some of whom commiserated the calamities of the Jews, while others hated them the more for their misfortunes, and a third sort gave no credit to the recital. In the mean time, Titus solemnly declared his innocence respecting the whole matter, vowing in the presence of God, that he exerted his utmost influence to render the Jews easy and happy in their fortunes, lives, and liberties. "But," said he, "if the Jews were determined rather to destroy each other, than to live in the bands of fraternal affection; if they preferred war rather than peace, and famine rather than plenty, it was not in my power to prevent them. As they were determined to set fire to the temple with their own hands, while I did every thing in my power to preserve it, the flesh of their own children is as good food as such parents deserve. For my own part, I am resolved that their iniquities shall be but the forerunners of their ruin; for I will no longer permit the existence of a city, in which mothers feed on their own children, and the fathers, with a still more horrid degree of impiety continue the war, after such plain and evident demonstration that the so doing is contrary to the will of Almighty God." Having said this, and reflected on the amazing obstinacy and incurable stubbornness of the faction, he looked on them as a people devoted to destruction; for he thought that the miseries they had already endured would have changed their sentiments, if it had been in nature that such an effect could be wrought.

Two of the legions having completed their platforms, Titus directed his battering rams to be planted against the western gallery of the outward temple on the eighth day of the month Lous. For the space of six days successively, he played his best piece of battery against this place; but without effect; for the engines could make no impression on the work. In the interim, some of the troops were employed in sapping the foundations on the north side; but after a prodigious labor, they found that they could only remove the outward stones, the porch still remaining firm; wherefore, finding that mines and batteries were ineffectual to answer the purpose, the Romans had recourse to the use of their scaling ladders.

Though the Jews were unable to prevent their enemies fixing their ladders, yet they made an obstinate resistance in every part where it was possible to be made. Those who ascended the lad-

ders were attacked immediately, and before they had time to put themselves in a posture of defence; others they threw down as they were ascending: some they destroyed as they were advancing with relief; and sometimes they overturned the ladders with the men upon them. On the whole, the Romans sustained a very considerable loss in this attack, especially in those contests which happened for the defence or recovery of their colors, which military people deem to be an affair of the utmost consequence. In the end, however, the Jews killed a number of the ensigu-bearers, keeping such ensigns as they got possession of, a circumstance which so discouraged the rest of the assailants, that they thought it prudent to retreat. However, to do justice to the besiegers, it must be acknowledged that not a single man among the slain disgraced the character of a Roman. Their opponents of the faction who had behaved well on former occasions, lost not their character for intrepidity; and Eleazar, the nephew of the tyrant Simon, was distinguished by his courage. Titus now finding that his own men were only devoted to ruin by his wishes to spare the temple of the enemy, he issued orders that his troops should set fire to the gates without loss of time.

At this juncture, two deserters from the Jews repaired to Titus, flattering themselves that their abandoning the faction at the time they had some advantage in their favor, would secure them the better reception. One of these deserters was Archelaus the son of Magadathes; and the other Ananus of Emmaus, one of Simon's guards, and deemed the most inhuman of all his attendants. The character of these men for cruelty was so well known to Titus, that he entertained some thoughts of putting both of them to death, notwithstanding their pretended attachment to his interest, being convinced that it was not an affection for his service, but consideration of their own safety that influenced their conduct. He thought that those who had first inflamed their country, and then abandoned it, were unworthy to live; but having reflected more seriously on the affair, he came to a resolution to spare them.

By this time, the gates of the temple were burning furiously, the timbers being all on fire; and the silver work above the gates melted, while the flames extended even to the adjacent galleries. The Jews were so much surprised by this unexpected event, that finding themselves encompassed by the flames, they regarded each other with looks of the most extreme astonishment, not even attempting to preserve what yet remained uninjured, or affecting any concern for what was already destroyed. In a word, they were totally dispirited for any kind of enterprise; so that the fire continued to increase all that day and the succeeding

night, till at length the galleries were totally burnt to the ground.

On the following day, Titus issued out orders for the suppression of the fire, and that the roads might be levelled for the march of his troops. His next step was to summon a council of his general officers, to concert the best mode of proceeding. These officers were Tiberius Alexander, his lieutenant general; Sextus Cerealis, the commander of the fifth legion; Lorgius Lepidus, of the tenth; and Titus Tigrius, who presided over the fifteenth; and to these were added Eternius Fronto, a captain of two of the legions of Alexandria; and Marcus Antonius Julianus, governor of Judea; exclusive of colonels and other officers, whose opinions it was thought proper to take, on the mode of proceeding requisite to be pursued with respect to the affair of the temple. Of these, some recommended a strict adherence to the laws of arms, urging, that while the temple remained, and the Jews continued their frequent associations in it, they would never desist in their opposition. Others gave their votes for sparing the temple, on the condition that the Jews should abandon it, and that it should be no longer considered as an object of contention; but that if possession of it should be acquired by dint of the sword, in this case, that they should not hesitate to burn it: not considering it as a temple, but as a castle: since the blame would then rest with those who compelled the burning of it, not with those whom necessity urged to the deed. Hereupon Titus gave his opinion, saying, "If the obstinacy of the Jews will convert a temple to a citadel, shall I take vengeance on their perverseness by wreaking my wrath on the stones of the building, and burn to ashes the most magnificent structure in the world on their account? Indeed, I am of opinion, that the robbing the empire of so distinguished an ornament would be a disgrace to the characteristic majesty of Rome." Alexander, Cerealis, and Fronto, hearing the sentiments of Titus, coincided with him in opinion, on which the council was dismissed. Orders were now issued that the army should be allowed to rest and take refreshment, in order to be better prepared for future enterprises. In the mean time, some select battalions were directed to observe the ravages made by the fire, and to take proper passages through the ruins.

The courage and strength of the Jews beginning now equally to fail them, they remained at peace during this day; but on the following day, about the second hour, having by that time recruited their spirits and acquired fresh resolution, they made a desperate sally through the eastern gate on the guards of the outward temple. At first, the Romans, under the protection of their bucklers, sustained the shock with the utmost resolution, it

making no more impression than it would have done against a stone wall; but all their courage and perseverance would not have enabled them long to hold out in opposition to so fierce and numerous an enemy, if Titus (who beheld the action from Antonia,) had not instantly come to their relief before they had yielded to their antagonists. On this relief some of the Jews fell back; and the Romans breaking in on their front, the main body fled with precipitation. After this the Romans retreated in their turn, while the Jews rallied and advanced in order of battle. Thus they continued alternately advancing or retreating, one party having now the advantage, and then the other, till about the fifth hour of the day, when the Jews were compelled to retreat into the temple and there enclose themselves. Hereupon Titus retired to Antonia, having come to a determination to make an assault on the temple on the following day with his whole army. But it seemed evident that divine providence had originally destined this place to be destroyed by fire, and that the period was at length arrived, that is to say, the tenth day of the month Lous, being the return of that day on which it had been heretofore burnt by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. Of this last conflagration, however, the Jews themselves were the evident occasion; for no sooner had Titus left them at their repose, than the insurgents made a violent sally on his guards, while they were engaged, by the general's orders, in extinguishing the fire. But on this occasion, the Romans routed the Jews, and compelled them to retreat to the temple for refuge.

An event happened at this period which took rise from the conduct of a private soldier, who thought himself actuated by a divine impulse, without pretending to any other authority for what he transacted. Having got on the shoulders of one of his comrades, he threw a fire-brand into the golden window that was opposite to the apartments on the north side of the temple. This action was no sooner done, than the place was in flames, which occasioned so violent a tumult among the Jews, that their countrymen hastened as fast as possible to their relief; for the present juncture, when every thing dear to them was at stake, was not a period in which to think of saving their lives or indulging themselves.

Titus was just now laying down to repose himself in his tent, after the fatigue of the action, when intelligence of the conflagration was brought to him; on which he immediately arose, and, ordering his chariot, proceeded to the temple to use all his authority towards the extinction of the fire. He was followed by his principal officers and the legions; but in a confused manner, as may be supposed of such an immense number, who had not received regular orders for their proceeding. Titus exerted himself to the utmost of his power both by words and signs, in

giving directions to stop the progress of the flames: but all his efforts were vain; the lesser noise was lost in the greater, nor were his words more heard than the signs and motions of his hands attended to. The soldiers were not to be governed by commands or threatenings, but, following the impulse of their rage, some were trodden on and pressed to death by the crowd, while others were suffocated by the smoke arising from the ruins of the galleries over the porches. The common soldiers who were in the temple urged, in excuse for their disobedience of the general's orders, that they could not hear what he said; while those who followed them gave orders that they should throw fire. In a word, the faction had no way to prevent what happened, and on which side soever they turned, destruction stared them in the face. The poor people, the sick, and the unarmed, were destroyed by the sword wherever they were found; numbers of unhappy wretches were left streaming in their own blood: dead bodies were piled in heaps around the altar, and the stairs were floated with a deluge of blood.

The fury of the soldiers had now arisen to such a height, that Titus, finding it impossible to restrain it, and that the fire continued to make additional ravages every day, immediately proceeded, with some of his officers of the first rank, into the interior temple, where, on a careful survey of the place, he found that its splendor and magnificence greatly exceeded what common fame had reported, and were at least equal to the very account propagated respecting them by the Jews. Titus having now remarked that the fire had not reached the sanctuary, and being of opinion that it might not yet be too late to preserve the holy place, instantly exerted himself, and entreated the soldiers, in the most earnest manner, to use their utmost endeavors to stop the progress of the flames; at the same time issuing strict orders to Liberalis, a centurion of the guards, to urge the accomplishment of this business, and to punish those who refused their assistance. But so violent was the rage of the soldiers for revenge, that they were not restrained within the bounds of their duty, either by motives of respect or fear. At the very time that Titus was exerting his utmost endeavors to preserve the temple, one of the soldiers set fire to several of the doorposts; on which Titus and his officers were obliged to retire to such a distance, that their services could no longer avail; so that in the end, the temple was destroyed, notwithstanding every generous effort Titus had made for its protection.

During the time that the temple was in flames, the soldiers seized every person they could find; and having first plundered, they slew them, without paying the least attention to age, sex, or quality. The slaughter on this occasion was immense: the old, the young, those of the priesthood, and those of the

laity, persons of all ranks and all degrees whether they sued for quarter or otherwise, were all involved in the general calamity of the war.

As the fire continued to increase, the noise of the flames was heard, intermixed with the groans of persons in the agonies of death: and to those at a distance the whole city appeared to be on fire, owing to the extent of the conflagration, and the depth of the hill. The confusion and disorder occasioned by this event were so great, that it is not in our power to describe them. The complaints and lamentations from the city were repeatedly echoed from the adjacent mountains and places beyond Jordan; but the calamity exceeded in reality all that could be expressed by the bewailings of the sufferers. The flames of fire were so violent and impetuous that the mountain on which the temple stood resembled one large body of fire, even from its foundation. The blood of the sufferers flowed in proportion to the raging of the flames; for the number of those who were slain exceeded that of their executioners. Dead bodies strewed the ground on every side, and the Roman soldiers trampled on the bodies of the slain in pursuit of the survivors. At length, however, a body of the insurgents repelled the Romans; and having forced a passage into the outward temple, effected their escape into the city, while the outward porch was gained by the remainder of their number.

The Romans, now finding that the temple was reduced to ashes, were less anxious as to the preservation of any particular buildings: wherefore they set fire to most of the gates and galleries at the same time, sparing only one on the east side, and another on the south: in a short time afterwards these underwent the fate of the former. They likewise burnt the treasury and the wardrobe, containing an immense treasure in jewels and money, and rich habits to a very large amount; for, in fact, the Jews had made this place a repository of every thing that they deemed most valuable.

By this time, the insurgents had fled into the city. The Roman army now placed their ensigns against the eastern gate, where they made sacrifices and thanksgiving, and proclaimed Titus emperor with every possible demonstration of joy. So large a treasure in gold was now obtained in Syria, that it was reduced to half its accustomed value.

The leaders of the faction, now finding how they were beset on all sides, and surrounded so that there was no possibility of their escape, proposed to enter into a treaty with the emperor: to which he, with his wonted benevolence of disposition, lent a favorable ear, partly, indeed, on the recommendation of his friends, and partly with a view to spare the city, in the hope that the insurgents, by their future conduct, might deserve his mercy.

Titus took his station on the west side of the interior temple, near the gates which led to the gallery; and between the temple and the upper town there was a bridge of communication by which the Romans and Jews were at this time separated. On each side, the soldiers crowded round their commanding officers; the Romans on the one part, eager to see how Titus would receive the supplicants; and the Jews, on the other, equally eager to learn what chance there was of receiving pardon. Titus having ordered his men to forbear making any acclamations, and to keep the strictest peace and most profound silence, intimating to the Jews by an interpreter that it was his province to speak first, addressed them in a speech, in which, after reproaching them for their crimes, he promised that all, except the leaders, should receive his pardon on submission.

To this address, the faction returned an answer, importing that they could not surrender on any promise or assurance of safety that the emperor could make, as they were solemnly sworn not to make any submission; but, with his permission, they were ready to retire with their wives and children into the desert, and leave the Romans the possession of the city. Enraged by the idea of prisoners giving law and prescribing terms to the conqueror, Titus caused proclamations to be immediately made intimating, that, for the future, no Jew should presume to apply to him for quarter or protection: but they now might have recourse to arms, and defend themselves in the best manner in their power; for that the laws of war should hereafter determine his conduct towards them.

Hereupon the soldiers had immediate permission to attack them with fire and sword, and to apply the plunder they could obtain in the city to their own use. On the present day no step was taken; but, on the following morning, they set fire to the council chamber, the castle, the register office, and a place named Ophlas, whence the flame spread to queen Helen's palace in the middle of the mount, destroying wherever they came, and burning a great number of dead bodies which crowded the streets and houses in every part.

The next proceeding of the insurgents was to advance to the royal palace, a place of great strength and security, in which treasure to an immense amount was deposited. From this palace the Jews routed the Romans, of whom they killed about eight thousand four hundred, and made prize of all the treasure to an immense amount. In the course of this engagement, two of the Roman soldiers were made prisoners, one of them of the cavalry, the other of the infantry. The latter was first put to death, and then dragged through the streets of the city, as if the intention had been to deride the whole nation by the insult offered to one unhappy wretch. The other prisoner pretending that he had a

circumstance of some consequence to disclose, was immediately conducted to Simon; but, on his arrival, he had nothing to mention that was deemed of the least consequence: wherefore Ardalas, one of Simon's officers, received orders to put him to death. Hereupon his hands were bound behind him, a cloth was tied over his eyes, and he was conducted from Simon's presence to be beheaded within view of the Romans: but just in the instant that the executioner was drawing his sword to perform his duty, the prisoner slipped from him, and effected an escape to the Romans. This circumstance being made known to Titus, he considered the case, and would not adjudge him to death for deserting from the enemy in so critical a situation: but deemed it so disgraceful for a Roman soldier to be taken prisoner, that he ordered him to be disarmed and cashiered, a punishment even worse than death in the opinion of a man of honor.

On the following day, it happened that the Romans routed the Jews from the lower town, on which occasion they set fire to all the buildings as far as Shiloah, and were happy to see the destruction occasioned by the conflagration; but they acquired no treasure, for the insurgents had already safely deposited this in the upper town. It is worthy of remark that the rebels were not of a disposition to lament any calamities their vices had occasioned; and they comported themselves with their accustomed pride, even when fortune appeared to be their determined foe. They seemed to behold the burning of the city with a degree of pleasure, and publicly said, that as affairs were then situated, the approach of death would not create in them the least degree of concern or regret. They had seen the destruction of the people almost to annihilation, they had been witnesses to the temple being burned to the ground, they had viewed the city in flames, and were now pleased that the Romans, who were to succeed them, could not take possession of any thing that might afford them satisfaction.

While affairs were in this situation, Josephus exerted his utmost endeavors for the preservation of the few remaining inhabitants of a ruined and almost depopulated city. He applied himself to the passions of the people, by every art of invective complaint, advice, and encouragement: but all he could say tended to answer no valuable purpose: the Jews were not only bound by the sacred obligations of their oaths, but almost subdued by the superior numbers of the Romans, exclusive of which they were inured to blood, and familiar with destruction.

In this unhappy situation of affairs they dispersed themselves throughout the city, searching all the ruins, vaults, and other places of secretion, for such as had deserted. Great numbers of these being seized, they were all put to death: for they were so weak that they could not seek their safety by flight, and the

dead bodies were thrown to the dogs. Still, however, famine threatened a death more dreadful than any other. Many of the Jews now deserted to the Romans in mere despair; for they could not entertain any other expectation, than they might be immediately put to death to prevent the miseries of starving. The insurgents likewise shared the same fate, having been instigated by the same motives. There was not a single street but what was bestrewed with the bodies of the dead, some of whom had been starved, and the rest falling a sacrifice to the rage of the pestilence.

The insurgents placed their last hope in concealment. They sought every private place of retreat, vainly hoping that they might remain concealed till the contest should be at an end, and the Romans had abandoned their place; they then imagined that their escape might be safely effected, without reflecting that the all-seeing eye of justice could penetrate into the most secret recesses. The Jews who had taken possession of the subterraneous retreats were authors of more calamity than the Romans in setting fire to the place. They first robbed and then murdered all who retired for safety to these places. The famine now raged to such a degree, that violent contentions arose respecting the coarsest and most loathsome food. I am of opinion, that if the famine had continued for any considerable time longer, they who survived would have made no scruple of feeding on the dead bodies of the deceased.

Such was the situation of the upper town on crags and precipices, that Titus thought it would be an impossibility to get possession of it without the erection of new mounts, wherefore he ordered that these works should be commenced on the twentieth day of the month Lous. It has been heretofore remarked that carriage was very expensive, and attended with great trouble; for to the distance of one hundred furlongs from the town, the materials had all been cut down for the construction of the works heretofore erected. The four legions now threw up a mount on the west side of the city opposite the royal palace; while the auxiliaries and the other forces threw up another mount near the gallery and the bridge, and fortified the place known by the name of Simon's tower, which had been constructed by Simon during his war with John.

At this period some of the Idumean officers held a council together concerning how their whole body should go over to the interest of the Romans. Having fixed on their plan, they despatched five deputies to Titus to make an offer of their services; and, by these, they sent a petition, imploring the emperor's mercy in the name of their whole people. It must be acknowledged that this application was made very late in point of time: but Titus, thinking that Simon and John would make no farther resist-

ance after so capital a desertion, dismissed the deputies with an answer importing that he would grant the petitioners their lives; for the truth was, that he deemed the Idumeans to be the most formidable of his opponents.

The above mentioned plot having been discovered, Simon gave orders that the five deputies should be instantly put to death, and that imprisonment should be the lot of those from whom they had received their directions, of whom James, the son of Soas, was deemed to be the principal. As the leaders were now in subjection, no great mischief was apprehended from the common soldiers; notwithstanding which a stricter guard was kept over the remainder of the Idumeans than had been heretofore thought necessary; but every effort that could be devised proved ineffectual to prevent their deserting to the Romans. It is true that many of them were slain in the attempt, but still greater numbers effected their escape, all of whom were received by Titus, who had so much generosity and benevolence, that he declined to press the rigorous execution of his former orders; while even the common soldiers, partly satiated with the blood they had spilt, and partly in the hope of obtaining booty, began now to conduct themselves with more lenity and moderation than they had heretofore done.

By this time, there was none remaining but the inferior kind of people: and these, together with their wives and children, were publicly sold like beasts in the market; and at very low prices too, for the purchasers were but few in number. Titus, now reflecting on this circumstance, and on the proclamation which he himself had issued, directing that no more of the Jews should desert to him singly, thought it his duty, as a man of humanity, to preserve as many of them as possible: and therefore determined to revoke his former order, and to receive as many of them as should come to him separately; but he would not receive any number together. He appointed proper persons to inquire into their characters, to discriminate between the worthy and the unworthy, and to treat every man according to his deserts.

At this period, there was a priest named Jesus, the son of Thebuth, who compounded for his life with the emperor, on condition of his delivering up several of the ornaments belonging to the temple, with some vessels and other articles, that had been presented thereto. In pursuance of this contract, he conveyed out of the temple, and handed over the wall several tables, goblets, and cups, with a pair of candlesticks, all made of the finest gold. He likewise presented the emperor with a considerable number of the vessels used in sacrifice, with precious stones, veils, and the habits used by the priests.

About this time, likewise, Phineas, the keeper of the sacred treasure, being taken prisoner, he gave up a vast number of the habits and girdles belonging to the priest, together with scarlet and purple stuffs which had been carefully laid by for future use. He likewise made a discovery of a quantity of cinnamon, cassia, gums, and perfumes which were used for incense daily offered, together with a number of sacred ornaments and effects which were the property of private persons. Now though Phineas was a lawful prisoner, regularly taken in open war, yet, in consideration of these discoveries, he was treated with as much lenity as if he had made them through the mere effect of his own inclination.

After the expiration of eighteen days, the erection of the mounts was completed on the seventh day of the month Gorpiæus, (answering to September,) at which time the Romans advanced with their engines for battery. Many of the insurgents, now despairing to hold possession of the place any longer, abandoned the walls and retired to the castle, while others concealed themselves in vaults and subterraneous passages. Still, however, there were some more obstinate than the rest, who were determined to oppose those who had the management of the batteries. In the mean time, the enemy was greatly superior to them in numbers and strength; and the Romans had the farther advantage, that their troops were in full health and spirits, and animated with the success they had obtained over an enemy that, having been unfortunate in their undertakings, were dejected by their losses, and almost abandoned to despair.

As often as any of the Jews observed a flaw in the wall, or that any of the turrets yielded to the impression made by the battering engines, they sought their safety by immediate flying from the place of apprehended danger; till at length even Simon and John were terrified even to the borders of despair, and fled before the Romans were advanced within such a distance as to be able to do them a personal injury; for their fears operated to such a degree, that they were frightened at danger whether real or apprehended. Though these men were some of the most abandoned of the human race, yet the extreme calamity they endured could scarcely fail of exciting pity in the breast of those who so lately knew them boasting of their imagined consequence, and triumphing in all the height of presuming arrogance. The change in their affairs was, indeed, very great, and distressing in the highest degree.

John and Simon now made an attempt on the wall which had been erected round the city by the Romans. They succeeded, in fact, so far in this attempt, as to make a breach in the wall; and their intention was to have attacked the guards, and by that means to have effected their escape. But when they expected to have been properly supported in this attack, they found that all

their friends had abandoned them: wherefore they retreated in confusion, as they were led by their fears and apprehensions.

In this distracted state of affairs, every man told such a tale as was inspired by his own apprehensions. While one brought intelligence that the whole of the wall to the westward was overthrown, others asserted the Romans were at the foot of this wall; and a third party declared that they had entered the city, and that some of them were in actual possession of the towers. Their imaginations appeared to realize their fears; they fell prostrate on the ground, lamenting their unhappy fate, bewailing their follies, and remained in a state of desperation of which no language can convey an idea.

The goodness and the power of God were remarkable, and likewise equally conspicuous on this occasion: for the tyrannical leaders of the opposition were eventually the occasion of their own destruction, by abandoning those forts of their own accord which could never have been taken unless the besieged had been starved out; and this they did after the Jews had in vain spent much time on other erections of inferior strength. By this providential turn of affairs, the Romans became masters of three impregnable forts, which they could never have acquired in any other manner; for the three towers were absolutely proof against battery of every kind.

No sooner had Simon and John, influenced by the impulse of a judicial frenzy, abandoned the towers above mentioned, than they hurried away to the vale of Siloah, where they reposed themselves for a short time after the fatigue they had undergone. Having refreshed themselves, and recalled their scattered ideas, they assaulted the new wall at the above mentioned place; but their efforts were so feeble, that they were easily repulsed by the guards; for their misery, despair, and fatigue, had so reduced them, that they had no strength remaining, and were glad to creep away with their adherents, and conceal themselves in vaults and caverns.

The walls being now in possession of the Romans, they hoisted their colors on the towers, and exulted with the most cheerful acclamations at the happy conclusion of a war which promised so little in the commencement: for they were compelled to believe that the war was at length ended, unless they had been disposed to discredit the evidence of their own senses.

By this time the soldiers had spread themselves into every part of the city, ranging through the streets with drawn swords, and sacrificing to their rage every one they saw without distinction. They set fire to the houses and burnt them and all their contents to the ground. In many houses into which they entered in search of plunder, they found every person of the families dead, and the house in a manner filled with the bodies of those who had

perished through hunger: wherefore, shocked at such a sight, they frequently returned without seizing their intended booty. Yet, notwithstanding this apparent respect they showed to the deceased, they gave no proofs of their humanity to the living; for they put every man to the sword who fell in their way, till at length the bodies of the dead filled up all the alleys and narrow passes, while their blood flowed to such a degree as to run down the channels of the city in streams. Towards night they gave over the practice, but renewed their depredations by means of fire.

The conflagration of the city of Jerusalem ended on the eighth day of the month Gorpiæus. Jerusalem was a city that must undoubtedly have been the envy of the universe in all the prosperity that attended it from its original foundation, had it borne any proportion to the misfortunes and calamities which befell it in the course of the siege above mentioned; and what aggravated these judgments was, that her own sons proved her destruction, and that she had nursed a race of vipers to prey on the body of the parent.

Titus employed himself in taking a survey of the ruins of this distinguished city: while admiring the works and fortifications, and particularly the fortress which the usurpers, in the extravagance of their folly, had abandoned—while he was contemplating the situation, dimensions, and elevation of the towers, with the elegance of the structures, the curiosity of the design and workmanship, and the masterly execution of the whole, he expressed himself in the following manner: "If our military operations had not been aided by the immediate interposition of heaven, it would have been impossible that we should ever have possessed ourselves of these fortresses. In a word, it was God who fougl for and aided us against the Jews; for a deed has been accom plished, which the hands of men or the force of engines coulc never have effected."

Titus having delivered himself to this effect, and said much more to the same purpose, his next business was to restore to liberty all those prisoners whom the oppressors had left in the towers. This being done, and the razing and demolition of the city completed, these towers alone excepted, he gave orders for sparing them as a memorial of his good fortune and success; for unless they had been abandoned, this success could never have arisen.

By this time the soldiers were perfectly fatigued with the work of slaughter, notwithstanding much appeared yet to be done. However, Titus commanded his men to desist so far as to the sparing all who should not be found in arms, or offer to make resistance: yet, notwithstanding these directions, the soldiers exceeded their orders, and put to death the sick and the aged

without pity or remorse. They who appeared to be in full health, and fit for service, were imprisoned in the temple, and in that quarter heretofore destined to the use of women. Fronto, one of the freed men and friend of Titus, was deputed to inquire into the cases of the prisoners, and to treat them according to their deserts. The abandoned, the seditious, and those who mutually charged each other with crimes, were put to death without mercy: but Titus preserved the young and healthy, particularly those of a comely appearance, to grace his triumph on his entry into Rome. All those who remained after this selection, and were above seventeen years of age, were sent in chains into Egypt to be employed as slaves; and those who were under seventeen exposed to sale, some only excepted, who were sent into the various provinces of the empire to be engaged as gladiators in the several theatres.

In the interim, no less than eleven thousand of the prisoners, who were under the care of Fonto, were starved to death; partly owing to their obstinacy in the refusal of provisions, and partly to the severity of their overseers, who neglected to supply them in a proper manner: but one great cause which aggravated this calamity, was the want of sufficient provisions for such an immense number.

Thus ended the important and melancholy siege; and the Roman soldiers having no living object on which to wreak their further vengeance, (for if they had, that vengeance would have been continued,) Titus gave orders that they should reduce the city and temple to a level with the ground, and not to leave any building standing, except the three distinguished towers, so often mentioned, which bore the names of Hippocos, Phasael, and Mariamne; and a part of the wall to the westward of the city, on which he intended to erect a garrison. The towers were ordered to remain as an evidence to future times of the skill and power of the Romans in becoming possessed of them. This order was executed with the utmost strictness, and the rest of the city totally demolished and razed even to the ground; so that it scarcely appeared to have been the residence of human creatures. Thus the factious multitude, whose seditions had created all the misfortunes, were reduced; and thus, likewise, was reduced the most distinguished city on the face of the earth.

About this period, Simon, the son of Giaras, was made a prisoner, in consequence of the following singular circumstance: When Jerusalem was so closely besieged that Simon was compelled to take refuge in the upper town, and when the Romans had actually got into the city, he was almost distracted to know how to dispose of himself; and at length he adopted the following plan. Having sent for a number of stone-cutters, miners,

smiths, and persons well skilled in iron works; and having provided a great number of tools and materials proper for their purpose, and provisions for a considerable time, they descended all together into a dark and private vault. In this place, they worked their way as far as they were able; but, finding the passage too narrow to answer their intentions, they began to dig and mine, with a view to open a passage through which they might effect their escape; but though they managed their provisions in the most frugal manner possible, they fell short before they had made any considerable progress in their work, by which means the whole plan failed. Reduced to the utmost necessity, Simon had recourse to a singular device to terrify the Romans. In pursuance of this plan, he dressed himself in a white garment, which was buckled round him, over which was thrown a purple cloak. Thus habited, he ascended from the ground, under the ruins of the late temple, to the astonishment of the soldiers, and others who beheld the apparition. As he advanced towards them, the soldiers assumed sufficient courage to demand his name and business; but Simon refused to answer their questions, and demanded to speak with the captain of the guard. Hereupon, they immediately sent to Terentius Rufus, who at that time had the command: and he soon discovered who Simon was, ordered him to be immediately put in chains, and then related all the particulars of the affair to Titus.

Simon was presented to Titus bound in chains: whereupon he gave orders that he should be detained a prisoner to grace his triumphant entry into Rome. Some short time after his arrival he appointed a day for the celebration of the nativity of his brother Domitian, with the utmost grandeur and magnificence: on this occasion, a great number of condemned persons were sacrificed to the splendor of the ceremony: for of those who were destroyed by beasts, by fire, or in combats with each other, it was calculated that not less than two thousand five hundred perished; yet, such was the inveteracy of the Romans against the Jews, that they thought even this number too small.

Some time after this, Titus went to Berytus, a city of Phœnicia, and one of the Roman colonies. In this place he continued some time, and there celebrated the anniversary of the birth of his father Vespasian, even with a greater degree of pomp and splendor than he had done that of his brother, both with respect to the articles of expense, and the public shows exhibited.

From Bertytus, Titus proceeded to Antioch, where he rejected some frivolous accusations which were brought by the citizens against the Jews. Thence he continued his journey to Egypt, and embarked at Alexandria for Rome, having previously to his embarkation despatched the two legions that attended him to their former stations, that is, the fifth was sent to Mysia, and the tenth

to Hungary. Simon and John, with seven hundred of the most comely of the prisoners, were ordered to be sent into Italy, that they might dignify the triumph of Titus on his entry into Rome.

Titus had a most favorable and agreeable voyage, and was received with as much honor and respect as his father had been before him: and exclusive of this general respect from the people, Vespasian went out in person to meet and congratulate him; a circumstance highly grateful to the public, who now beheld the father and his two sons meeting together in circumstances of the most auspicious nature.

In a short time after this, the senate passed a decree for two separate triumphs, the one in honor of the father, the other in that of the son; but notwithstanding this determination, Vespasian and Titus resolved that the solemnity to their mutual honor should be jointly celebrated. When the day was fixed on which it was to take place, there was hardly a single person in the city who did not attend as a spectator; so that when the whole multitude was assembled together, there was scarcely room enough left for the emperor and his son to pass. Before the break of day, the soldiers marched to the palace gates, near the temple of Isis, in regular order, preceded by their officers, to wait the arrival of the princes, who had lodged the preceding night in the temple above mentioned.

Soon after the dawn of the morning, Vespasian and Titus came forward, being clothed in purple robes, according to the custom of their country, and having on their heads crowns of laurel. They proceeded to the Octavian walks, at which place the senate, nobility, and knights of Rome, waited for their arrival. Before the portal there was erected a tribunal, on which they ascended, and reposed themselves on seats of ivory, which had been placed there on the occasion; and being thus situated, orations were made in their praise, while the surrounding multitudes testified their joy by the loudest acclamations. On this occasion the princes wore no arms; and while the orators were rapidly declaiming their praise, Vespasian made a signal for silence, which being strictly obeyed by every person present, he stood up; and having thrown his robe over a part of his head, he offered up certain prayers, agreeably to the custom on such occasions; and in this, Titus followed his example. This being done, Vespasian addressed the company in a concise speech, and then dismissed the military people to regale themselves at his expense. In the next place, Vespasian and Titus proceeded to the triumphal gate, which received its name on account of the grand procession passing that way. Here they took some refreshment; and, being then arrayed in their triumphal habiliments, they offered up sacrifices at the gate, and then proceeded in great pomp

and solemnity through the midst of the crowd, that all the people might be gratified by a sight of them.

It is impossible for language to convey any adequate idea of the splendor and magnificence of this public exhibition, whether the expense and contrivance of it, or the novelty of its ornaments be considered. On this occasion all the most valuable curiosities which the Roman nation had been collecting through a long succession of ages, were combined to furnish the splendid triumph of one day, and displayed as a monument of the national grandeur. So great a number of curious performances in gold, silver and ivory, equally valuable for their cost and their admirable contexture, were now exhibited to the public view, that they seemed rather a confusion than a regular display of riches.—There likewise appeared such an amazing variety of public garments and Babylonian embroideries, together with jewels and other stones of great value, which were disposed into the forms of crowns, and other devices, that what used to be accounted curious, was now no longer deemed so. Images of the gods of the Romans were carried in procession, which were extraordinary for their size and constructure; and besides these, there were resemblances of various sorts of living creatures, which were dressed so as to answer their characters.

A great number of people dressed in cloth of gold and purple, carried these pageants through the streets; and they who were more immediately appointed to attend the pompous train, were habited in garments of a singularly splendid appearance. Even the very prisoners that made a part of the train, were dressed with unusual decency, to hide the misery of their condition, and conceal the marks of slavery that appeared in their countenances; but in all the procession, nothing was so extraordinary as the carrying of the machines, many of them were three or four stories in height, so that it is astonishing how the bearers could support them. The expense of these was proportioned to the contrivance of them; for the furniture and hanging were embroidered with gold, ivory, and other things of high value.

In the procession were likewise the most lively and picturesque representations of war and all its attending circumstances. In one place was to be seen the appearance of a fruitful country totally laid waste; in another the destruction of armies; some being killed, some flying, and others taken prisoners: there were the resemblance of walls levelled with the ground, forts destroyed, fortified cities entered through breaches, towns taken by surprise, and streets streaming with blood, while the vanquished were imploring for mercy. Houses appeared to be falling on the heads of their owners, while temples were apparently in flames, and rivers wound their course through the conflagrations, instead of supplying water to man and beast, and refreshing the fields and meadows with their streams. Nor was this any other than

an admirable representation of the suffering Jews, so finely contrived by the ingenuity of art, that to those who were acquainted with the fate of Jerusalem, it might seem to be a well told story of the destruction of that celebrated city.

On each of the pageants was a representation of the manner in which some town or city was taken, with a figure of the governor of the place. To these succeeded a view of the shipping, and then were exhibited the spoils that were taken in various places, of which the most considerable were the golden table and the golden candlestick, which were found in the temple at Jerusalem. The first of these weighed several talents, and the latter was never applied to the use for which it had been designed. This candlestick consisted of a large foot, from which there ascended a sort of pillar, and from that pillar, as from the body of a tree, there arose seven branches, the top of each branch resembling a lamp; and the number was seven in reference to the esteem in which the seventh day is held by the Jews. The next, and indeed the last trophy exhibited of the conquest which the Romans had made, was the code of Jewish laws, which was followed by figures of ivory and gold, intended as an emblematical representation of victory; and the procession was closed by Vespasian, Titus and Domitian, all mounted on fine horses, elegantly caparisoned, and appearing with a dignity becoming their high rank; and in this splendid manner, they proceeded together to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, and thus put an end to the procession.

When they had arrived at the temple, they remained there for a short time in conformity to an ancient custom, which rendered it necessary that they should stay in that place till they received advice of the death of the general who had commanded the army of the enemy. The general on the present occasion was Simon Giaras, (who had been led in triumph through the streets,) round whose neck a rope being fixed, he was drawn through the market-place, those who drew him putting him to death, agreeably to the laws and usages of the Romans in the case of notorious offenders. Intelligence being brought that Simon was dead, the very air was rent with the shouts and acclamations of the multitude.

The people then offered up vows and sacrifices; and this solemn business being discharged, Vespasian and his sons returned to the palace, where they gave a most magnificent entertainment on the occasion. Indeed, the whole city exhibited one general scene of joy and festivity, and public thanks were every where offered for the final victory which had now been obtained over their enemies; a victory which seemed to promise a lasting tranquillity, while it redounded to the immortal honor of the heroes who had acquired it.

As soon as the triumphs were ended, and the peace of the empire was secured, Vespasian caused a temple to be erected and dedicated to peace. This edifice was remarkable for its richness and elegance, and still more so for the short space of time in which it was constructed. It was adorned with a great abundance of curious pieces of painting and sculpture, which had been collected at an immense expense: and it was, on the whole, so magnificent and elegant a building, that persons came from all parts of the world to obtain a sight of it. The golden table and the candlestick, as articles of inestimable value, Vespasian caused to be placed in this temple. With regard to the code of Jewish laws and the purple vestments of the sanctuary, they were deposited with the utmost care in the royal palace.

The emperor having granted a commission to Lucilius Bassus, appointed him to be lieutenant-general of Judea, he thereupon succeeded Cerealis Petilianus in the command of the army, and soon rendered himself master of the castle of Herodian by treaty. This being done, he collected his troops which were stationed in different parts of the country, proposing, by the assistance of the tenth legion to reduce Machæras, as a work of indispensable necessity, since that place was so remarkably strong, that it was a kind of incitement to acts of rebellion; and its situation was such as to inspire those in possession of it with fresh courage, though on the other hand, it was calculated to repress the ardor of an assailant.

Machæras is situated on a mountain of immense height, and is of so strong a nature, that it is rendered almost impregnable. It is likewise, in a manner, inaccessible; for nature has surrounded it with valleys that are almost impassable, and cannot be filled up. These valleys are of such a depth as not to be surveyed from the mountain without horror. The mountain stretches sixty furlongs to the west, and approaches almost close to the lake Asphaltites, and the castle commands a very extensive view of the district on that side.

To the north and south the vallies are very extensive, and appear to be equally well calculated for the defence of the place. On the east, the depth of the valley is not less than a hundred cubits; and opposite to Machæras is a mountain to which this valley extends. This place was originally fortified by Alexander king of the Jews, who built a castle on it: but this castle was afterwards destroyed by Gabinius, when he made war on Aristobulus: but Herod the Great, thinking this mountain well worthy of his attention, particularly in case of any dispute with the Arabians, who were remarkably well situated to annoy him, he caused a strong wall, fortified with turrets, to be built round it, and erected a handsome city, in which he placed a colony of inhabitants; and from the city he made a passage up to the castle

Round the castle, at the top, he built another wall, at the angles of which were turrets sixty cubits in height; and, in the midst of the inclosure he caused a large and elegant palace to be erected, which was supplied with water from a variety of cisterns; so that the situation and convenience of this place seemed to have arisen from a happy conjunction of nature and art, each contributing in a liberal manner to its improvement. Herod, likewise, deposited in the castle an immense store of military arms, engines, arrows, &c.; and stocked it with a great quantity and variety of provisions; so that there could be little danger of the garrison being reduced either by famine or force.

When Bassus had taken a careful survey of Machæras, he came to a determination to beseige the place: and, for this purpose, he intended to have filled up the valley to the eastward of the town, and to make his approach from that quarter. His first proceeding was to throw up a mound opposite the castle with all possible expedition, as the readiest way to insure his success. The Jews who were natives of the city, now divided themselves from those who were strangers, whom they dismissed as persons who were unworthy a connexion with them, and sent them into the lower town to sustain the first shock, themselves taking possession of the castle, which, from its strength, they thought would be the most defensible, and a place from which, in case of necessity, it was probable they might make the best terms with the Romans. In the mean time they exerted their utmost industry to repel the attacks of the besiegers. There was not a day passed in which the Jews did not sally forth in a determined manner, when violent skirmishes ensued, and both parties lost a considerable number of men. The advantage lay sometimes on one side and sometimes on the other; the Jews being successful when they attacked the Romans by surprise, and the latter being the victors when they were properly advised of the advance of the enemy, and had time to prepare for their reception. But it appeared evident that the siege was not to end in this manner, since a most singular accident reduced the Jews to the disagreeable necessity of surrendering the castle.

In Machæras there was a young man of a spirit remarkably bold, daring and enterprising. His name was Eleazar, and he exerted himself in a very extraordinary manner, both by advice and example, to check the progress of the Romans, and encourage his countrymen to oppose their proceedings. This Eleazar frequently sallied forth in a most determined manner, and was constantly the first man to begin an encounter, and the last to retreat when retreat became absolutely necessary. Now it happened after the conclusion of a skirmish on a particular day, when both parties were retired, that Eleazar determined to evince his utter contempt of danger; and to prove that he

was incapable of fearing any man, stopped without the gate of the city, and entered into an idle conversation with some of the Jews that were on the walls, seeming to pay no kind of regard to any thing that might pass around him.

Eleazar being now within view of the Romans in their encampment, an Egyptian soldier named Rufus took an opportunity to run to him unnoticed, and seizing him with all his accoutrements, conveyed him to the enemy. The prisoner was no sooner brought, than Bassus directed that he should be stripped, laid on the ground, and publicly whipped within view of those in the city. The distressful situation of this youth afflicted the Jews to such a degree, that the generality of them burst into tears, and lamented his unhappy fate. Bassus finding how exceedingly concerned the people in general were for the misfortunes of this one man, a thought struck him that he hoped to improve to his advantage; for he conceived, that if he could but increase the ardor of their passions, they might be induced to purchase the life of Eleazar by a surrender of the place. The scheme succeeded to the height of his expectation: a cross was erected, on which it seemed to appear that Eleazar was to be immediately crucified; but no sooner was this cross fixed, than the whole garrison exclaimed, as with one voice, that they could no longer bear their sufferings. Immediately hereupon, Eleazar entreated them to consider their own situation, and that of himself, who was sentenced to an ignominious death; and conjured them to desist from contending against the superior courage and success of the Romans, to whose dominion all the world had submitted.

Eleazar being of a distinguished family, and having many friends and relations in the castle, their interest was exerted in support of his earnest supplication; so that, in the end, the besieged, compassionating his case in a high degree, despatched deputies to the Romans, who were commissioned to offer the surrender of the castle, on the condition that Eleazar's life and liberty should be granted him, and that the garrison should be permitted to dispose of themselves as they thought proper.

Bassus readily consented to these terms; but the people in the lower town, enraged to think that they had not been consulted before the agreement was made, determined to secure themselves by privately retreating in the night. Those who were in the castle gave notice of this to Bassus as soon as the gates were opened, partly lest themselves should be suspected to have been concerned in the plot, and partly through envy of their associates. Hereupon Bassus attacked them; but the most gallant of those who first got out made their escape, while the rest, in number no fewer than seventeen hundred were slain, and their wives and children made slaves. Notwithstanding the above mentioned circumstance, Bassus gave Eleazar his liberty, and dismissed the garrison agreeably to contract.

The transactions above mentioned being at an end, and Bassus having received information that great numbers of the Jews who had effected their escape during the siege of Jerusalem and Mach æras, had assembled together and retired to the forest of Jardus, he marched with his army immediately to that place; and on his arrival, found that the intelligence which had been brought him was true; wherefore he issued orders that his cavalry should in stantly surround the whole wood, which was so punctually obeyed, that not a single Jew could make his escape. In the mean time, the infantry were employed to cut down the trees and bushes, which formed those thickets, under which the Jews had taken shelter; so that by this means they were deprived of all possi bility of concealment, and had no hopes of safety but in cutting their way through the forces of the enemy.

Being reduced to the alternative of perishing or taking this desperate step, they united in a body, and made a violent attack on those who surrounded them, who received the assault with the utmost bravery. In a word, the rashness excited by despair on the one side, and determined courage on the other, combined to render the engagement equally obstinate and violent. In the end, however, the Romans obtained the advantage, with the loss of only twelve men slain, and a small number wounded; whereas, every man of the Jews was killed in the action, amounting in the whole to the number of three thousand. Among these, was the commander in chief named Judas, the son of Jair, of whom men tion has been made in a former part of this work. This Judas was an officer during the siege of Jerusalem, from whence he effected an escape through a subterraneous passage.

At this juncture, the emperor sent a letter to his officer Tiberius Maximus, commissioning him to expose the lands of the Jews for sale; and declaring that he would not rebuild any of their cities, but seize them all to his own use. Tiberius was directed to leave eight hundred soldiers in Emmaus, which is situated about sixty furlongs from Jerusalem. The emperor likewise issued orders that the Jews should pay a poll-tax of two drachmas annually; and this money was to be paid into the capital, as similar taxes had been formerly paid at the temple.

The death of Bassus, which happened in Judea, made room for the advancement of Flavius Silva, who succeeded to his government. Silva being informed that all the country was in due subjection, one castle only excepted, he collected all the forces he was able, with a determination to make an attack on it. The name of this castle was Massada, and it was under the command of Eleazar, the leader of the Sicarii, who had obtained possession of this fortress.

The Roman general, Silva, now marched to lay siege to Massada, in which was a garrison of the Sicarii, commanded

by Eleazar, who was the chief of the people bearing that name. Silva now possessed himself of the adjacent country, and with very little difficulty: he then disposed of his troops in the most commodious manner possible, and ran up a wall round the castle, at once to secure his soldiers, and to prevent the escape of the enemy. He now looked out for a place the most convenient for the station of his camp, which he found to be on the spot where the adjacent mountain communicated with the rock on which the castle stood. One great inconvenience now attended Silva; for the provisions with which his army was supplied by the Jews, were brought from a very great distance; and as there was no fountain near the place, the procuring of water was likewise attended with very great difficulty.

As soon as the above mentioned disposition of affairs had taken place, Silva prepared to commence the siege, which, as will appear from the situation of the castle, was likely to cost much time, and to be attended with great difficulty. This castle was situated on a large and high rock, which was surrounded by deep and craggy precipices. They who stood at the top could not see the bottom, on account of the higher rocks hanging over those that are beneath. Even the beasts could not climb this rock, so difficult was the access, except by two passages; one of which is from the east side from the lake Asphaltites, and the other from the west side, the former being much more dangerous than the latter. One of these passages bears the name of the Snake, from the number of turnings that there were in the ascent; for in many parts of it, the stones so intersected each other, that passengers were obliged to go backwards and forwards to pass them; and the road was so narrow that the traveller could not keep both his feet on the ground at the same time. Exclusive of all things, one false step would have plunged a man to the bottom of a most horrid precipice. The road was deemed thirty furlongs from the bottom to the top of the mountain; and on this eminence there was a plain, on which the high priest Jonathan caused a castle to be built, to which he gave the name of Massada, and claimed the honor of being the founder of this castle, which was afterwards fortified and adorned, with immense labor and at a large expense, by Herod the Great; a wall being also built round it by Herod, eight cubits in breadth, and twelve in height, with white stones of considerable value. Herod likewise caused seven and twenty turrets, each of fifty cubits high, to be erected; and made a communication between these turrets and the buildings on the interior side of the wall. The nature of the soil of the plain being found to be extremely rich, Herod gave orders that it should be well cultivated, with a view that those who might in future times have occasion to take refuge in the castle, might be certain of being supplied with the necessaries of life.

Within the limits of the castle, he caused a sumptuous and magnificent palace to be erected for his own accommodation.—The entrance of this palace was situated so as to front the north-west; the walls of it were of great strength, and remarkably high; and at each of the four corners was a tower of the height of sixty cubits. The variety, decorations, ornaments, richness and splendor of the several apartments, baths, and galleries, exceeded all description. The whole was supported with pillars, each of one entire stone, and so disposed as to give proof of the strength of the structure and the judgment of the architect.—The pavement and the walls were diversified with stones of a variety of colors. A great number of large cisterns, hewed out of the rock, for the preservation of water, were dispersed in the different quarters of the palace to the castle, which was quite invisible from the outside: and, as hath been heretofore observed, the other passage was rendered altogether impassable; and, with regard to the western passage, it was totally blocked up by a tower that was erected in the narrowest part of it, at about the distance of a thousand cubits from the castle. This will serve to show how strongly the place was fortified by art as well as by nature, and how difficult the conquest of it must have been, even with the slightest opposition.

Thus fortified, this castle had the appearance of being proof, not only against force, but was unlikely to be subdued by famine; for when it was surprised by Eleazar and the Sicarii, there were found in it great treasures of corn, wine, oil, pulse, dates, &c. equal to the consumption of many years; and the articles were said by Josephus to be as fresh as if they had been but newly deposited, though they had been treasured up an hundred years.

Perhaps this circumstance might be owing to the extreme purity and salubrious quality of air in so elevated a situation. Agreeably to the king's order, there was likewise laid up a magazine of various kinds of arms, for the accommodation of ten thousand men, and also an immense quantity of unwrought iron, brass, lead and other articles, which it is presumed were intended for some capital enterprise.

The Jews being now so closely pent up within the walls of Massada, that it was utterly impossible that they should effect an escape, Silva advanced with his machines to the only place which he could find up, in order to raise a mount. Beyond the tower which blocked up the western passage to the palace and castle, there was a large rock, which bore the name of Leuce; this rock was larger than that on which the castle of Massada stood, but not so high by about three hundred cubits. Silva had no sooner taken possession of this rock, than he issued orders to his soldiers to raise a mount upon it; and they were so diligent in this busi-

ness, that they soon got it up to the height of two hundred cubits; but finding that it was not of sufficient strength to support the machines, they raised it on a kind of platform composed of large stones, fifty cubits in height, and of the same breadth. On this platform they built a tower of the height of sixty cubits, which they fortified with iron. Exclusive of their common machines, they had another kind, which had been invented by Vespasian, and were afterwards improved by Titus.

From the tower above mentioned, the Romans assailed the besieged with such impetuous showers of stones and flights of arrows, that they were afraid to appear on the walls. In the interim, Silva directed his battering-rams against the wall, till at length it was damaged in some places. In consequence hereof, the Sicarii instantly ran up another wall behind it, which was composed of such materials as to deaden the shock, and sustain no kind of damage. This wall was built in the following manner: A row of large pieces of timber was mortised into another of equal size, and a space was left between them equal to the thickness of the wall. This space was filled with earth of the nature of clay, and boards were nailed across the frame to prevent the earth from falling. Thus prepared, it was as strong as the wall of a house; and the more violently it was battered, the stronger it became, the earth being more firmly closed by each stroke it received.

Silva, finding that the battering with his machines did not produce the consequences he expected, ordered his soldiers to provide themselves with fire-brands to destroy the works of the enemy. The wall being hollow, and chiefly composed of timber-work, immediately took fire, and the flames raged with the utmost violence; but the wind being in the north, it drove the fire with such rapidity on the Romans, that they expected the almost instant destruction of their machines: but, just at this juncture, the wind veered to the south, and beat so violently on the wall, that the whole of it was in flames in a moment. The Romans, grateful for this providential stroke in their favor, returned to their camp full of spirits, and with a fixed determination to attack the enemy by break of day on the following morning; and, in the mean time to place strong guards, that their opponents might not escape in the night.

However, Eleazar had no idea of departing himself, or of permitting any of his people to evacuate the place; but as the wall was now totally consumed, and there appeared to be no longer any chance either of relief or security, it became necessary to consider how their wives and children might be most effectually preserved from the violences to be expected from the Romans on their taking possession of the place. Having seriously reflected on this affair, Eleazar determined in his own

mind that a death of glory would be greatly preferable to a life of infamy; and that the most magnanimous resolution they could form, would be to disdain the idea of surviving their liberties. His own sentiments being thus formed, he resolved to endeavor to inspire others with the same; and, for that purpose, he summoned a number of his friends and associates, whom he addressed in a speech, strongly recommending suicide.

This was received in a very different manner by his different auditors, some of whom were charmed with his proposal, and ready to execute it, deeming death an object of desire in their present situation; while others, from the tenderness of their nature, were equally terrified at the thought of destroying their friends, or becoming their own executioners. They regarded each other with looks of the utmost anxiety, while their flowing tears testified the sentiments of their minds. Eleazar was greatly chagrined at what he deemed a weakness, that degraded the dignity of his plan, and might tempt those who had appeared to be determined to abandon their resolutions. He therefore pursued his plan of exhorting the people, but in a different manner; for he now discoursed on the immortality of the soul, addressing himself particularly, and with the utmost earnestness, to those who were weeping.

Eleazar would have proceeded long on this subject, but that the people interrupted him with the warmest expressions of their readiness to adopt the plan he had recommended, each being ambitious to excel the other in giving this distinguishing proof of his wisdom and courage; thus passionately were these people devoted to the destruction of themselves and their families. It was very extraordinary, that when they came to give proof of their resolution, not a man of them failed in the arduous trial. They retained their kindest affections for each other to the last moment, conceiving that they could not render a more acceptable office, or give a more perfect proof of their regard. While they embraced their wives and children for the last time, they wept over and stabbed them in the same moment—rejoicing, however, that this work was not left to be performed by their enemies. They considered the necessity of the action their excuse, and reflected that they only destroyed their dearest friends to prevent their falling by the hands of the Romans. In a word, there was not one man who wanted the necessary courage on the occasion, and they killed their friends and relations without distinction: and they thought the destruction of their wives and children far preferable to the evils to which they would otherwise be exposed.

They who had been the principal agents in the slaughter above mentioned, penetrated as they were with grief for the necessity that had occasioned it, resolved not to survive those they had slain; and immediately collecting all their effects together, set

them on fire. This being done, they cast lots for the selection of ten men out of their number to destroy the rest; and these being chosen, the devoted victims embraced the bodies of their deceased friends, and then ranging themselves near them, cheerfully resigned themselves to the hands of the executioners. When these ten men had discharged the disagreeable task they had undertaken, they again cast lots which of the ten should kill the other nine, having previously agreed, that the man to whose lot it might fall, should sacrifice himself on the bodies of his companions; so great was the trust that those people reposed in each other. The nine devoted victims died with the same resolution as their brethren had done; and the surviving man, having surveyed the bodies, and found that they were all absolutely dead, threw himself on his sword among his companions, but not till he had first set fire to the palace.

This melancholy scene which happened on the fifteenth day of the month Xanthicus, was now concluded; and the deceased had imagined that not a single Jew would fall into the hands of the Romans: but it afterwards appeared that an old woman, and another woman who was related to Eleazar, together with five children, had escaped the general massacre, by concealing themselves in a common sewer. Including women and children, no less than nine hundred and fifty persons were slain on this occasion.

On the dawn of the following morning, the Romans prepared their scaling ladders in order to make an attack; but they were astonished in the highest degree on not hearing any noise but the crackling of the flames, and were totally at a loss what conjecture to form. On this they gave a loud shout (such as is customary when a battery is played off) in expectation of receiving an answer. The noise alarmed the women in their place of retreat, who, immediately coming out, related the truth to the Romans as it really had happened. The story, however, appeared so extraordinary, that they could not give credit to it; but they exerted themselves in extinguishing the fire; and being employed in this service till they came to the palace, there they found the bodies of the deceased lying in heaps. Far, however, from exulting in the triumph of joy that might have been expected from enemies, they united to admire what they deemed the steady virtue and dignity of mind with which the Jews had been inspired, and wondered at that generous contempt of death by which such numbers had been bound in one solemn compact.

The temple and holy city thus destroyed and levelled with the ground, and the whole nation either miserably buried under its ruins, or dispersed into other countries, might, one would think, have opened the eyes of the poor remains of that once favored people, and crushed at once all hopes and expectations of any

other deliverer but him whom they had rejected and crucified. Many of them were indeed moved; but the far greater part remained in their infatuated state, and, according to Christ's own prediction, have been dispersed ever since over all the world, to attest his truth and their own obdurate blindness, till the happy time comes when the veil shall be taken off their eyes. When that will be, is one of those secrets which God hath been pleased to leave as yet unrevealed, and which it would be vain and presumptuous to search too curiously after.

After the reduction of Jerusalem and Judea, Agrippa and his sister retired to Rome, probably with Titus, who was excessively fond of both, but especially of Bernice. We have seen, through the course of this last year, how serviceable the brother had been to that general, accompanying him in person, and assisting him with men and amunition, for which we were told Titus got his kingdom enlarged by the emperor, and procured him prætorian honors. But his extraordinary friendship for that prince flowed chiefly from his special fondness for his sister, as if she had been his real wife. Titus, nevertheless, had promised her marriage, and would in all probability have kept his word, had he not found that the Romans were wholly averse from it, partly on account of her being a Jewess, and partly on that of her royal descent. To pave himself, therefore, the way to the empire, he was forced to discard her, in opposition to both their inclinations. What became of her afterwards, is not worth inquiring. As for Agrippa, he was the last of the Herodian race that bore the royal title, and is supposed to have died at Rome about the seventieth year of his age, and in the ninetieth of Jesus Christ. Josephus has this remarkable saying on the Herodian line, that they all failed within a hundred years, though they were at first so numerous, as we have seen them in the genealogy of Herod the Great.

We have already had occasion to mention the number of the slain, as well as of the prisoners, according to Josephus. A curious author has since taken the pains to make a fresh computation out of him of all that perished in the several places throughout that kingdom, and out of it, from the beginning to the conclusion of the war, in which we believe our readers will be glad to see the whole amount of the several bloody articles, as it were, at one view. They are as follows:

At Jerusalem, by Florus' orders - - - - -	630
By the inhabitants of Cæsarea in hatred to the Jews	20,000
At Sythopolis in Syria - - - - - - -	30,000
By the inhabitants of Ascalon in Palestine - -	2,500
By those of Ptolemais - - - - - - -	2,000
At Alexandria in Egypt under Alexander the apostate Jew - - - - - - - - - -	50,000
At Damascus - - - - - - - - -	10,000

At the taking of Joppa	8,400
In the mountain of Cabulo	2,000
In a fight at Ascalon	10,000
In an ambush	8,000
At the taking of Aphec	15,000
Upon Mount Gerizim	11,600
Drowned at Joppa by a sudden storm	4,200
Slain at Taricheæ	6,500
Slain or killed themselves at Gamala, where none were saved but two sisters	9,000
Killed in their flight from Giscala	2,000
At the siege of Jotapata, where Josephus commanded	30,000
Of the Gadarens, besides a vast number that drowned themselves	13,000
In the village of Idumea	10,000
At Gerasium	1,000
At Mæcheron	1,700
In the desert of Jardes	3,000
Slew themselves at Massada	960
In Cyrene, by the governor Catulus	3,000
Perished at Jerusalem by sword, famine, pestilence, and during the siege	1,100,000

According to this the whole amounts to 1,337,490; besides a vast multitude that died in the caves, woods, wildernesses, common sewers, in banishment, and many other ways, of whom no computation could be made; and ten thousand that were slain at Jotapata more than our author has reckoned. For Josephus mentions expressly forty thousand, but he only thirty thousand.

THE END.

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